Food and Foodways of Medieval Cairenes

Aspects of Life in an Islamic Metropolis of the Eastern Mediterranean

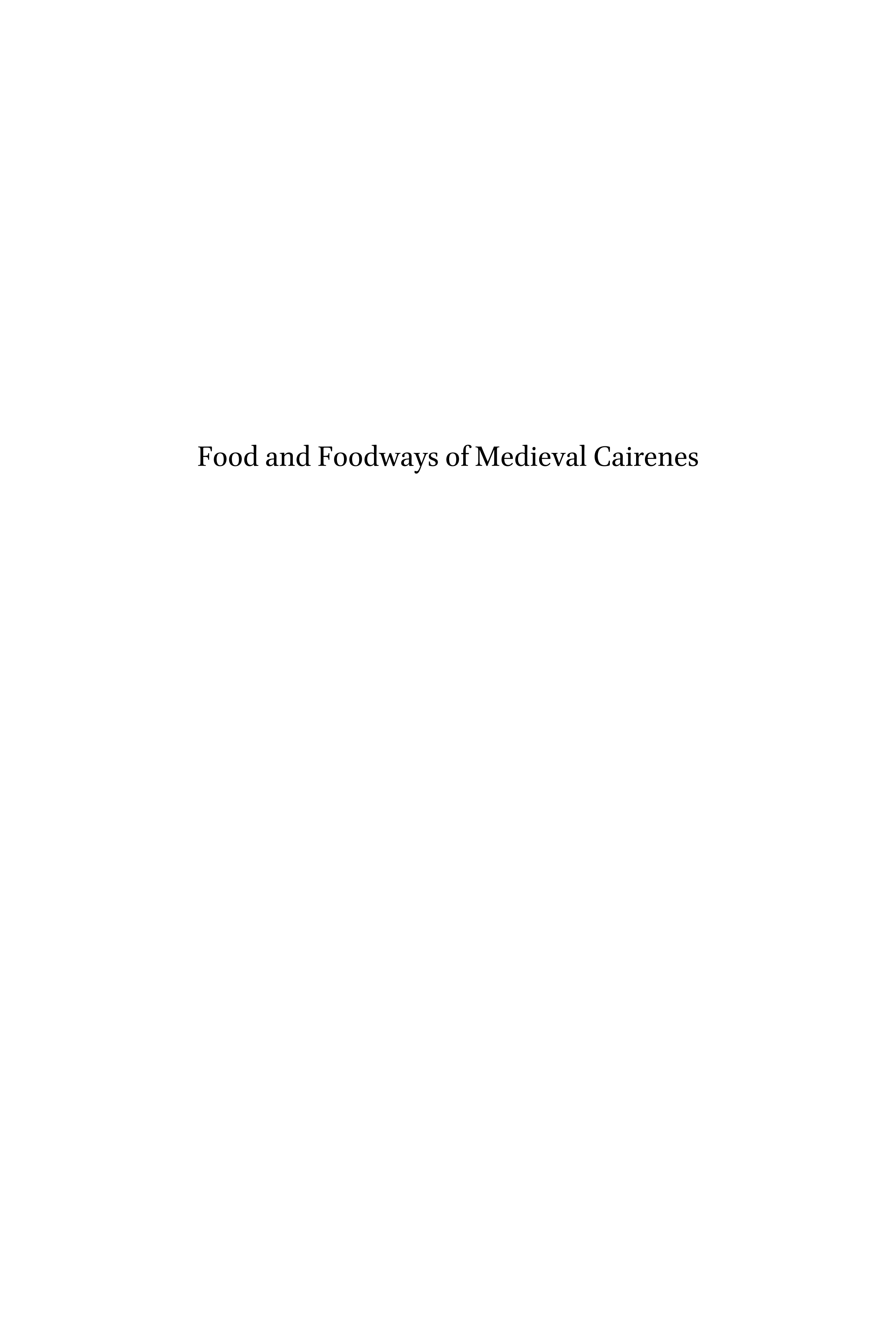


BY

PAULINA B. LEWICKA

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ISLAMIC HISTORY AND CIVILIZATION. STUDIES AND TEXTS



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Islamic History and Civilization

Studies and Texts

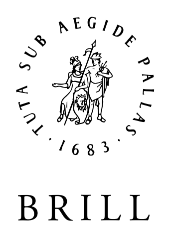
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Paulina B. Lewicka



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Cover illustration: "The two protagonists sitting in a house", from Ibn Butlan's "Daʿwat al-atibbaʾ" (The Banquet of Physicians), p. 10v.
Courtesy of the L. A. Mayer Museum for Islamic Art, Jerusalem, Israel.
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PREFACE

As areas of research, "food" and "foodways" are both very capacious. Food is a pervasive social phenomenon and can be approached from many different perspectives. Foodways can be described by a number of definitions whose details vary according to the discipline in which the term is used. Due to the flexible and non-uniform nature of the term, "foodways"—very much like "food" itself—lie within a sphere of interest of anthropologists, sociologists, economists, historians, literary critics, nutritionists, and other scholars who use food as a lens of analysis. Also, "food" and "foodways" often overlap as areas of research.

In the present study, the term "food" refers both to edibles and aliments as well as to menu; "menu" means not only a list of dishes but also "those sets of principles which guide the selection of aliments from the available totality."[1] Since the approach I have employed aims above all at reconstructing a presumed profile of what the historical population of an Islamic urban center actually ate, such aspects of the diet as the nutritional value of foodstuffs or agricultural problems of food production are not discussed here. As for "foodways," it refers here to the history and culture of human nourishment within a specific geographical location. Or, more specifically, to production, procurement, preparation, presentation, and consumption of food as practiced by a given population, as well as to environmental, cultural, social, political, and economic aspects of these activities. In practical terms, the examination of "food" and "foodways" so understood implies an attempt to define what the ordinary Cairenes of the Middle Ages[2] ate, why they ate what they did, how they ate it, and what were the ways in which food shaped their lives. However, it should be kept in mind that defining a pattern inevitably involves generalization, and that generalized definitions of *a* style, or *a* standard, that prevailed

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[1] Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil, *Sociology on the Menu: An Invitation to the Study of Food and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 67. Cf. E.N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 73, where the author maintains that "taste preferences, like other bases of foodways, are a biocultural phenomenon. Biology sets the parameters; culture fine-tunes the actual patterns of behavior."

[2] For the explanation of the term "medieval" as used in the present study see below, "Introductory Essay: Medieval Cairo and its Inhabitants," p. 1.

among any sizable multiethnic and multiclass urban population over a period of 500 years cannot always be very precise.

As a corpus-based study which aims at profiling the food culture of medieval Cairenes, the present book covers a rather diverse set of subjects. The questions they touch range from the genesis of the local culinary culture to various daily practices as followed within this culture, to the profile of its menu, with all its ingredients, preparations, and cooking techniques. Also discussed are the customs and habits related to the idea of eating, as well as behavior at the table and rules which governed it. The chapters dealing with food and those dealing with eating are collected in two coherent and self-contained parts: "Part I. On Food" and "Part II. On Eating," with the latter constituting a logical sequence to the former. While Parts I and II discuss the ways of food, Part III is devoted to study of what might, by analogy, be called "drinkways." Titled "On Beverages and Drinking," it deals with various kinds of non-alcoholic, quasi-alcoholic, and alcoholic drinkable liquids consumed in medieval Cairo, about the nature of these liquids and their place in culture, daily life, and history of the city inhabitants.

Contemporary scholarship approached these topics in an uneven way. The bulk of secondary literature dealing with medieval Arabic-Islamic culinary culture is relatively rich and touches on the majority of possible aspects of food studies—dietary, literally, social, and economic ones included. Among these works, studies related to medieval Egypt, or Cairo, form but a modest part. The origins of the Cairene culinary culture have never been discussed as a separate subject.[3] The same in fact refers to various aspects of production and procurement of food as practiced in medieval Cairo, as well as to the rules of table behavior—with the exception of Amalia Levanoni's "Food and Cooking during the Mamluk Era," where the author discusses the table manners as presumably followed by the Mamluks.[4] The problems related to the question of eating in public places have also been scarcely explored, while the private eating space, or "dining-room" (or the lack of it) was only very briefly mentioned by Doris

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[3] The earliest stages of the culinary history of Egypt are discussed in William J. Darby, Paul Ghalioungui and Louis Grivetti, *Food: The Gift of Osiris*, 2 vols. (London, New York and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1977) and *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology*, ed. Paul T. Nicholson and Ian Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). See also Cérès Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques rituelles et alimentaires coptes* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1971).

[4] Amalia Levanoni, "Food and Cooking during the Mamluk Era: Social and Political Implications," *MSR* 9/2 (2005): 219–22.

Behrens-Abouseif in *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction*,[5] Laila ʿAli Ibrahim in "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo,"[6] and Nelly Hanna in "La cuisine dans la maison du Caire."[7]

Surprisingly, topics such as beverages and drinking in the medieval Cairene context were not given much attention, either. However, it should be noted that a number of interesting comments or remarks referring to these questions were made in works whose subjects focused on other problems. These works include André Raymond's "Les porteurs d'eau du Caire,"[8] Joseph Dreher's "Un regard sur l'art culinaire des Mamelouks. Pâté d'agneau, ragout de volaille et eau de rose,"[9] Peter Heine's monograph *Weinstudien: Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelater*,[10] Eliyahu Ashtor's "An Essay on the Diet of the Various Classes in the Medieval Levant,"[11] Daniel De Smet's "Les interdictions alimentaires du calife fatimide al-Ḥākim: marques de folie ou annonce d'un règne messianique?"[12] and S.D. Goitein's *Daily Life*.[13]

As for food itself, it has attracted scholars' interest much more effectively than any other topic discussed in the present book. Critical editions and annotated translations of the medieval Arabic cookery books of Egyptian (or partly Egyptian) origin have been crucial for studies on Cairene foodstyle. Without Manuela Marín's and David Waines's critical edition of

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[5] Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1989), 39.

[6] Laila ʿAli Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 49.

[7] Nelly Hanna, "La cuisine dans la maison du Caire," in *L'Habitat traditionel dans les pays musulmans autour de la Méditerranée*, ed. Institute de Recherches et d'Études sur le Monde Arabe et Musulman, Université de Provence. Vol. II, *L'Histoire et le milieu* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1991), 409.

[8] André Raymond, "Les porteurs d'eau du Caire," *BIFAO* LVII (1958): 183–202.

[9] Joseph Dreher, "Un regard sur l'art culinaire des Mamelouks. Pâté d'agneau, ragout de volaille et eau de rose," *MIDEO* 24 (2000): 79–80.

[10] Peter Heine, *Weinstudien: Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelater* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982).

[11] Eliyahu Ashtor, "An Essay on the Diet of the Various Classes in the Medieval Levant," in *Biology of Man in History: Selections from the Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, ed. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 147–51.

[12] Daniel De Smet, "Les interdictions alimentaires du calife fatimide al-Ḥākim: marques de folie ou annonce d'un règne messianique?," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. Urbain Vermeulen and Daniel De Smet (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 54–5.

[13] S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, vol. IV, *Daily Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 253–61.

Kanz al-Fawāʾid,[14] without Charles Perry's annotated translation of *Kitāb Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda*,[15] and without Sulaymā Maḥjūb's and Durriya al-Khaṭīb's edition of *Al-Wuṣla ila-l-Ḥabīb*,[16] any attempt to discuss the cuisine and food culture of medieval Cairo would have proven a much more laborious, perplexing and thorny undertaking.[17]

With regard to editing and translating, similar recognition is due to Joshua Finkel's translation of (and commentary on) the unique literary work dating back to the Mamluk period and known in English as *The Delectable War between Mutton and the Refreshments of the Market-Place*.[18] Finkel's translation of the story, which is curious but crucial for our understanding of the culinary culture of medieval Cairo, was recently supplemented by Manuela Marín's critical edition of the Arabic text.[19] Independent commentaries to the text of the *Delectable War* made by Geert van Gelder and Manuela Marín[20] complete and update Finkel's analysis. Apart from the *Delectable War*, these two scholars discussed also another "culinary" work of medieval Cairo, that by Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī, the religiously educated son of an Egyptian mamluk and the hashish eater whose satirical collection of prose and verse throws a peculiar light on some aspects of the food and foodways of Cairo.[21]

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[14] *Kanz al-Fawāʾid fī Tanwīʿ al-Mawāʾid* (*Medieval Arab/Islamic Culinary Art*), ed. Manuela Marín and David Waines (Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1993).

[15] Charles Perry, "The Description of Familiar Foods (*Kitāb Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda*)," in Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry and Charles Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery: Essays and Translations by Maxime Rodinson, A.J. Arberry and Charles Perry* (Blackawton: Prospect Books, 2001), 273–465.

[16] *Al-Wuṣla ilā-l-Ḥabīb fī Waṣf aṭ-Ṭayyib wa-ṭ-Ṭīb. Taʾlīf Ibn al-ʿAdīm*, ed. Sulaymā Maḥjūb and Durriya Khaṭīb (Aleppo: Jāmiʿat Ḥalab, 1986–1988).

[17] Due to the influence of al-Baghdādī's *Kitab aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, or "Baghdad Cookery Book" (and of the culture it represented) upon the Egyptian literature of the genre, the significance of A.J. Arberry's annotated translation of this work should not be disregarded (in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 19–89).

[18] Joshua Finkel, "King Mutton: A Curious Tale of the Mamluk Period," *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und Verwandte Gebiete* 8 (1932): 122–48 (I); 9 (1933–1934): 1–18 (II).

[19] Manuela Marín, "Sobre alimentación y sociedad (el texto arabe de la 'La Guerra deleitosa')," *Al-Qantara* 13/1 (1992): 83–122.

[20] Geert van Gelder, *God's Banquet: Food in Classical Arabic Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 96–9; Manuela Marín, "Literatura y gastronomía: dos textos árabes de época mameluca," in *La alimentación en las culturas islamicas. Una coleccion de estudios editados por Manuela Marín y David Waines*, ed. Manuela Marín and David Waines (Madrid: Agencia Espagñola de Cooperación Internacional, 1994), 149–53.

[21] Van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 90–6; Marín, "Literatura y gastronomía," 138–49. For more data and a short comment on Ibn Sūdūn's work see below, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 6. "Works of fiction and *adab*," p. 56.

Of the studies related to the culinary culture of Cairo, two articles deserve special attention. Both deal with the Mamluk epoch and both are devoted to the examination of the historical circumstances rather than to the analysis of a particular literary source. While, however, Joseph Dreher's "Un regard sur l'art culinaire des Mamelouks" concentrates on the substance of cooking, represented in the article's subtitle by "pâté d'agneau, ragout de volaille et eau de rose,"[22] Amalia Levanoni's "Food and Cooking during the Mamluk Era" examines the social and political contexts of foodstuffs, eating, and feeding.[23] Together, the two essays form an indispensable companion to the food culture of the Mamluk aristocracy. *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī* by Nabīl Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, presenting the key aspects of the Ayyubid and Mamluk sultans' foodways,[24] completes the list of studies devoted to the culinaria of the post-Fatimid elites of Cairo. Apart from these, there are two more works which, although dealing with food of the medieval Arabic/Islamic region in general, should by no means be disregarded in studying the Egyptian/Cairene diet. One is "An Essay on the Diet of the Various Classes in the Medieval Levant" written by Eliyahu Ashtor.[25] The other is "Recherches sur les documents arabes relatifs à la cuisine,"[26] Maxime Rodinson's memorable essay, the value of which simply cannot be ignored by any student of the medieval Arabic food culture.

As a study of food and foodways of a historical population, the present book constitutes an attempt to discuss otherwise ambiguous aspects of the past. Due to the very fragmentary, incomplete, and sometimes puzzling evidence based on extremely diverse source material, the historical investigation quite often stood on ground so uncertain that guesswork and speculation were the only way to proceed. Since finite statements cannot be made when the data is insufficient, cautious hypothesizing with a number of possibilities left open was often the only possible conclusion. That is why expressions such as "it is not impossible that," "it is probable that," "it seems that," "it might have been that," etc. were so frequently, if

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22 Dreher, "Regard," 55–82.
23 Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 201–22.
24 Nabīl Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī: Zaman al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa-l-Mamālīk* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Miṣrīyyah, 1989).
25 Ashtor, "Essay," 125–162.
26 Maxime Rodinson, "Recherches sur les documents arabes relatifs à la cuisine," *REI* (1949): 95–165; English language version: "Studies in Arabic Manuscripts Relating to Cookery," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 91–163.

not too frequently, used throughout the book. Whenever this quantity or quality of the source information allowed me to do so, I proposed more definite solutions or theses.

However, history is not an exact science, and even when the facts are reasonably well established, historians may differ radically in their interpretations. Our knowledge of the past is a subject of change and evolution. As in many respects the present work is a pioneering study, some of my assumptions may with time have to be corrected.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Given the complex nature of food and foodways as areas of research, in my attempt to reconstruct these aspects of the medieval Cairenes' life I had to enter the fields of many disciplines. Fortunately, I have been able to use the knowledge and expertise of many of my colleagues. They provided me with assistance in several forms, also in ways of which they were not even aware. My indebtedness to all of them is immense. I would like to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to Professor Janusz Danecki, who has devoted so much of his time to me over so many years. Without his advice and encouragement I would probably have not enjoyed my work so much. Many thanks also to Professor Ahmad Nazmi and Dr. George Yacoub, who helped me decipher the penmanship of the Arab scribes whose MSs I used. I owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Michael Ursinus, for his assistance in providing access to material collected in German libraries, and for his inspiration. I would also like to thank Professor Michael Abdalla for explaining various sophisticated aspects of food production technologies; my husband, Professor Zbigniew Lewicki for scholarly support and linguistic advice; Dr. Małgorzata Redlak for her advice and comments concerning the questions related to art and archeology; Professor Katarzyna Pachniak for scholarly support and friendly understanding. It is a pleasure to express my special gratitude to Professor Amalia Levanoni, for her help, support and inspiring attitude. I also owe special thanks to the reader of the manuscript of this book, who shall remain nameless, for his comments, criticisms, suggestions and encouragement. Many thanks also to the ever-patient staff of the interlibrary loan department of the Warsaw University Library. My particular thanks are due to Kathy van Vliet for her friendly support. During the lengthy work on this study I discussed various questions with my friends, who provided fresh, thought-provoking opinions which have been more valuable to me than they may realize.

ABBREVIATIONS

Journals and Collections of Essays

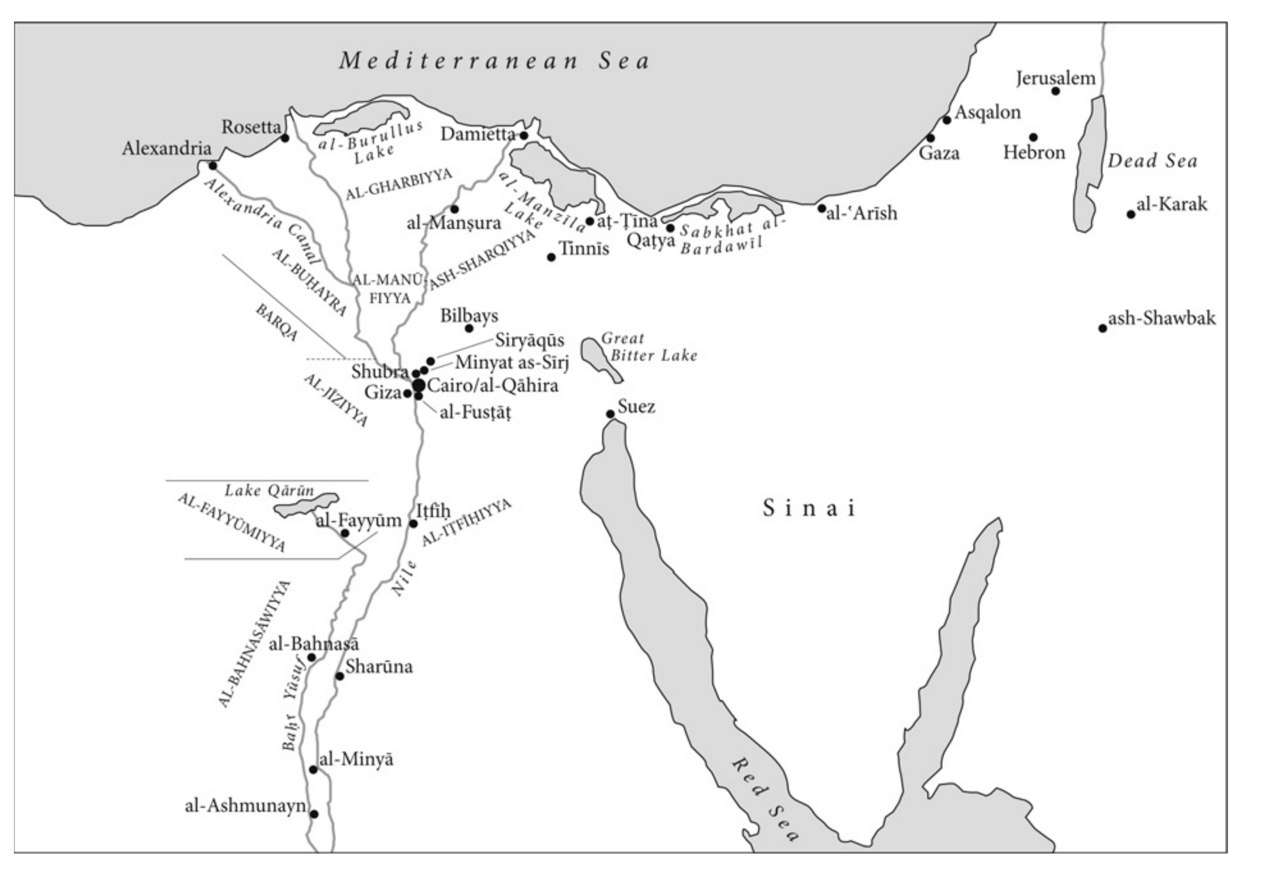
Short references to individual works are, where appropriate, given at the end of the bibliographical entry

AI	*Annales islamologiques*
BÉO	*Bulletin d'études orientales*
BIFAO	*Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*
BSRGE	*Bulletin de la Societe Royale de Geographie d'Egypte*
EI	*Encyclopedia of Islam*
IC	*Islamic Culture*
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
IOS	*Israel Oriental Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JARCE	*Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic History of the Orient*
JIH	*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
KHKM	*Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*
MIDEO	*Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales*
MSR	*Mamlūk Studies Review*
MW	*The Muslim World*
NARCE	*Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt*
PO	*Przeglad Orientalistyczny*
REI	*Revue des études islamiques*
SAI	*Studia Arabistyczne i Islamistyczne*
SI	*Studia Islamica*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift für Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

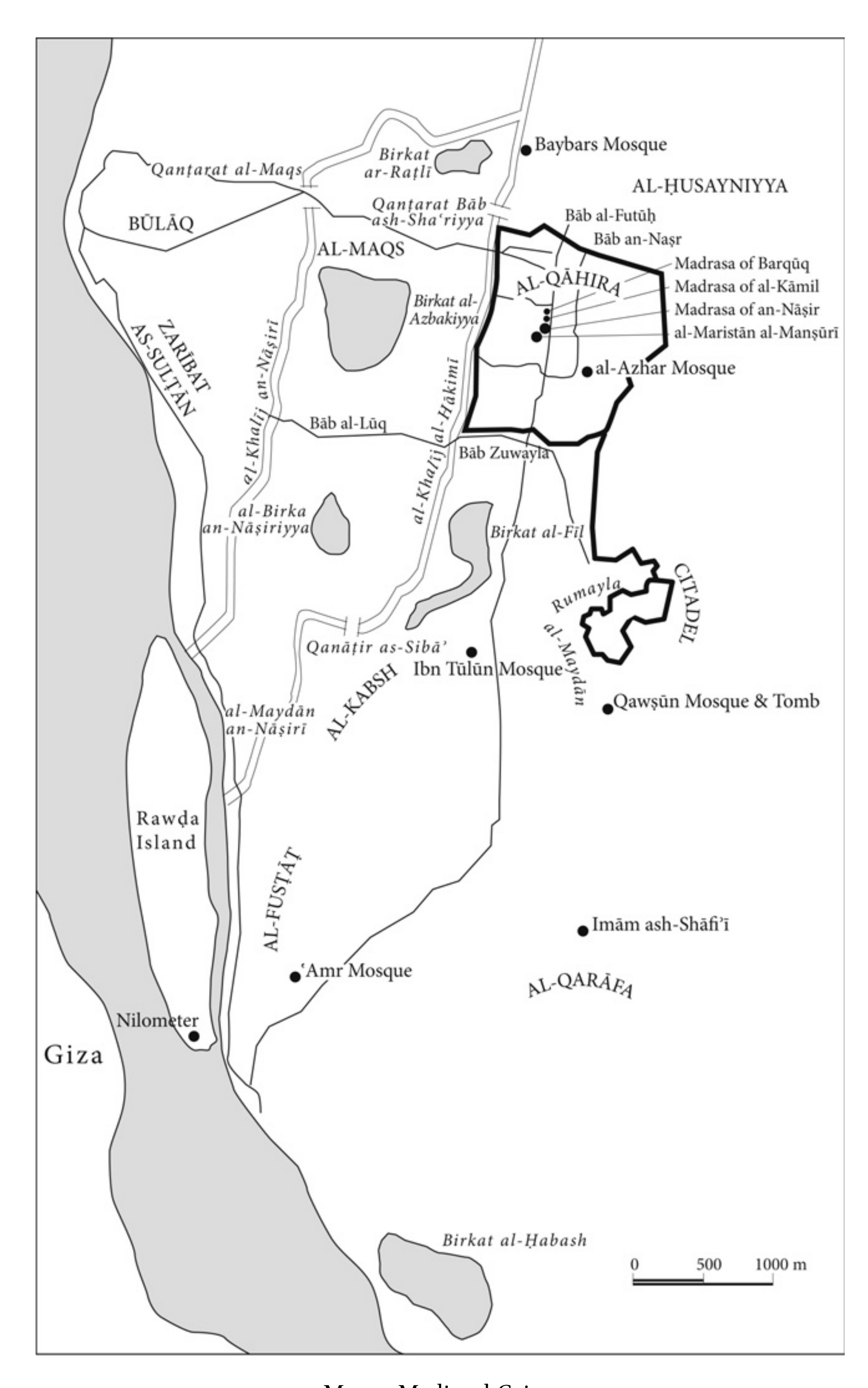
MAPS



Map 1. Egypt, Syro-Palestine and Iraq.



Map 2. The Nile Valley and the Sinai Peninsula.



Map 3. Medieval Cairo.
(Adapted from Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 159.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

MEDIEVAL CAIRO AND ITS INHABITANTS

The ever-convenient adjective "medieval," when employed to cover the specific period of an Islamic city's history, is also rather inaccurate and vague. In order to avoid misunderstanding here, it should be explained that the term is applied to the time frame which basically corresponds to the European understanding of the Middle Ages. More precisely, it refers to the period limited by the two events fundamental for the history of Cairo, that is the founding of al-Qāhira in the late fourth/tenth century, and the Ottoman occupation of the city in the early tenth/sixteenth century. However, the history of medieval Cairo is not that of al-Qāhira alone, but also that of much older al-Fusṭāṭ, the town known also as Miṣr, which neighbored al-Qāhira from the south. True, al-Fusṭāṭ was a separate urban entity whose history, urban morphology, and population composition differed from those of al-Qāhira. At the same time, however, the two-mile long distance between the cities was short enough to make their fates interwoven. Therefore, while discussing most aspects of the history of medieval Cairo one can never neglect al-Fusṭāṭ. After all, had it not been for al-Fusṭāṭ, whose population reached at the height of the city's greatest prosperity approximately 300,000, al-Qāhira itself would probably not have been founded in its location. Nor would it have developed into a metropolis with the population of 450,000[1] whose name is known in its Westernized form as "Cairo."

[1] The figure 450,000 refers to the population of Cairo before the plague of the 1340s. For a discussion on various estimates regarding the population of medieval Cairo see *Grandes villes mediterraneenns du monde musulman medieval*, ed. Jean-Claude Garcin (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2000), 179–82; 205–13; also André Raymond, *Cairo: City of History* (Cairo: AUCP, 2001), 136–7. It should be kept in mind that the population of both al-Fusṭāṭ and al-Qāhira fluctuated significantly. Although relatively safe from foreign invaders, the two cities suffered enormously from natural disasters. Plagues (of which the Black Death was, of course, the most disastrous) and famines (the most horrible of which were probably those of the late 1060s and the early 1200s) occasionally depopulated the agglomeration. Apart from the more or less obvious impact on demography, social dislocation, physical and mental health, mentality, social and individual behavior, religiosity, spiritual life, etc., such human disasters had also direct bearing on material culture of the place they affected. Devastating as they were for all kinds of handicraft and trade, they must have also affected the foodways of Cairo. Apart from the rise of food prices, however,

Actually, the location of al-Qāhira was an effect of two strategic decisions taken by ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿĀṣ and Jawhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī. ʿAmr, an outstanding Arab commander and a contemporary of prophet Muḥammad, came to the then Byzantine Egypt from the Arabian Peninsula in 18/639 at the head of the Arab army. Both he and his warriors were first-generation Muslims participating in what is known in historiography as the Islamic conquests. Having signed a treaty with the Byzantine authorities whose troops he had just defeated, in 21/642 ʿAmr set up a garrison camp at the foot of the ex-Byzantine stronghold of Babylon. In a relatively short time this camp became a flourishing town of al-Fusṭāṭ. As for Jawhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī, a gifted Greek commander of the fourth Fatimid caliph, he came to Egypt in 358/969 from North Africa, leading a large army of mostly Berber troops. As soon as he had taken the country over from its incapable Ikhshīdid rulers, Jawhar started to build there a new capital center for his suzerain. The town he founded, al-Qāhira, was situated north of al-Fusṭāṭ, by then an already prosperous and lively urban center. Al-Qāhira, or Cairo, would later become a nucleus of the flourishing metropolis bearing the same name.[2]

The sandy area on which the two military settlements were established stretched between the head of the Nile Delta to the north and the entrance of the Nile valley to the south. It was here that Lower and Upper Egypt met. The muddy eastern bank of the river—or, in the case of Cairo, the canal bank that ran parallel to the river—delimited the area from the west, while the barren limestone cliffs of Muqaṭṭam Hills bordered on it

the food-related tangible effects (such as, for example, the disappearance of a particular food article or of a dish) of famines or plagues are difficult to define.

For a detailed discussion on plague, and the Black Death in particular, its demographic effects and its economic consequences, see Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 143–280; idem, "The Second Plague Pandemic and its Recurrences in the Middle East: 1347–1894," *JESHO* 22 (1979): 162–189; idem, "The General Mortality of the Black Death in the Mamluk Empire," in *The Islamic Middle East, 700–1900: Studies in Economic and Social History*, ed. Abraham L. Udovitch (Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1981), 397–427. For the famines see, for example, Yaacov Lev, "The Regime and the Urban Wheat Market: The Famine of 662/1263–64 in Cairo," *MSR* 8/2 (2004): 150–61; also William Tucker, "Environmental Hazards, Natural Disasters, Economic Loss, and Mortality in Mamluk Syria," *MSR* 3 (1999): 107–28.

[2] For a concise survey of the ancient history of the place see Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, *La Capitale de l'Egypte jusqu'a l'epoque Fatimide. Essai de reconstruction topographigue* (Beirut Orient-Instituts der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft; Stuttgart: in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 3–7; Raymond, *Cairo*, 1–4.

from the east. Due to the silting process, the river course slowly moved westward, gradually exposing new grounds for urbanization.[3]

Historical records do not allow us to outline the climate of medieval Cairo in a comprehensive way. Nevertheless, they contain a number of noteworthy clues. The earliest temperature reports for Cairo were recorded at the turn of the eighteenth century by the scientists who participated in the French expedition to Egypt, even if François Jomard's information in this respect is a little bit ambiguous. In one of the chapters of *Description de l'Égypte* he states that "the climate of Cairo is not much variable; winter is hardly felt. The warmth is very strong during the summer and so is in the winter. Average temperature is 22.4 degrees centigrade . . . Sometimes, but very rarely, temperatures fall below zero by night; this occurs only in the deserts which are east of the city."[4] Elsewhere in the volume, however, Jomard admits he witnessed subzero temperatures in Cairo. This occurred, for example, on 29 November 1798 or on 6 March 1799, when the temperature fell to minus 4°C. The following winters were very cold, too. As for regular temperatures at noon, they rose in Cairo to 10, 20, 25, or 30°C, depending on the season. In the morning, however, temperature could fall even to 2°C, as it "sometimes happens in January."[5] According to Edward Lane, who stayed in Egypt in the years 1833–1835, in Lower Egypt (which is however not exactly the same as Cairo) temperatures reached 90 to 100°F (32–38°C) in the hottest season (presumably June-August), and 50 to 60°F (ca. 10–16°C) in winter months (presumably January-March).[6]

Modern temperature records cannot be uncritically applied to the Middle Ages, if only because of climate-affecting weather anomalies which occurred in that epoch. As climate is vulnerable to change, phenomena such as volcanic winters, particularly that of 535–536 C.E., Medieval Warm Period (ca. 800–1300), and Little Ice Age (from ca. fourteenth to mid-nineteenth century) must have influenced the southernmost limit of the Nile Delta, too.[7] Inapplicable directly as they have to be, Jomard's remarks

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[3] The eastern bank and the island stabilized in their present positions in the sixteenth century; see Raymond, *Cairo*, 3.

[4] "Description abrégée de la ville et de la citadelle du Kaire," in *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne* II (II–e partie), VII (Paris: C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1826), 579.

[5] "Appendice," § I.er, *Du climat du Kaire*, in ibid., 765–6.

[6] See Edward W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians* (London 1836; repr. The Hague and London: East-West Publications, 1989), 12.

[7] For an attempt to correlate climate phenomena with the Near Eastern history see Arie S. Issar and Mattanyah Zohar, *Climate Change. Environment and History of the Near East* (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag, 2007).

in *Description de l'Égypte* are nevertheless consistent with what the medieval records say about the Cairo weather. Information included in the Geniza documents and in the Arab sources allow us to conclude that the temperatures in the area were agreeable for most of the year. The heat, whatever its strength, was the norm: it provided thermal comfort and was not considered oppressive. High temperatures, whatever they were, might have been relatively easy to bear in Cairo due to low humidity and the soothing northern breeze. It seems that the area was, as it is today, vulnerable to hot southerly winds which in the spring and summer brought clouds of sand and dust. Be that as it may, no medieval author complained about the heat. The attacks of cold, however, made the unaccustomed people suffer and complain.[8] Short and rare, such attacks could be violent and severe—in 396/1005–6 storm winds brought thunder and hail (*barad*) "shaped like plates" which broke upon falling on the ground. Some of the pieces reached over two *ūqiyas* of weight (i.e. ca. 75 grams); others were as big as eggs. The hail covered the ground completely and stayed for a few days.[9] In 753/1352–3 snow/hail (*thalj*) fell in the vicinity of Birkat al-Ḥabash, or the Ethiopian Pond, while in 918/1512–13 it was so cold in Cairo that water froze and frost damaged a number of trees.[10] While such extreme occurrences were not frequent, winters, however short and mild (by European standards), brought much discomfort.

Naturally enough, the climate affected the lifestyle, including the menu. Apart from determining the flora and fauna of the country, the predominantly hot temperatures stimulated decomposition of food and thus required that most of fresh foodstuffs be transformed fast—either into ready-to-eat products and dishes or into preserves destined for storage over a longer period. Consumption of items such as raw meat—in the form of similar to that of a tartar steak—was out of the question. Meat had to be processed with the use of fire, preferably the same day the animal was butchered. The same, of course, was true with regard to raw fish—in Cairo nobody would consider preparing something like sushi

[8] See S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. V, *The Individual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 101–3; and *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne* II, VII, 765, where Jomard describes the Cairenes' reactions to cold weather.

[9] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ al-Ḥunafāʾ bi-Akhbār al-Aʾimma al-Fāṭimiyyīn al-Khulafāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad (Cairo, 1996), II, 67.

[10] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb as-Sulūk li-Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. M. Mustafa Ziada and Said A.F. Ashour (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat at-Taʾlīf wa-t-Tarjama wa-n-Nashr and Maṭbaʿat Dār al-Kutub, 1930–1973), II/3, 884 and Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ az-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʿ ad-Duhūr*, ed. M. Mostafa (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1960–75), IV, 253, respectively.

or sashimi.[11] Similar considerations applied to fresh milk which, exposed to high temperature of the air, would not stay uncurdled for long. Bread had to be eaten fresh, preferably when still warm from the oven. If not consumed immediately, in the hot air it quickly became as hard as stone and could be used only when soaked in broth or like liquids.

Egypt is a predominantly dry, desert land which, except along the Mediterranean shore, enjoys virtually no regular rainfall to moisten the soil. The scarcity of rains made the whole country depend entirely on the Nile floodwaters which seasonally fertilized the cultivable lands lying along the narrow stripe of the river valley and in the Delta. Inundation seasons were perfectly regular: the Abyssinian rains made the river level start rising in Egypt about the summer solstice and intensified during July. In Cairo, the Nile reached its plentitude in August. During the inundation, most of the country's arable lands were under water for six to eight weeks.[12] Having impregnated the valley's soil, the river gradually fell until the period when it again began to rise. As the nature was not uniformly benevolent, the quantity of the Nile flood varied from year to year. On the Nilometer installed on the Rawḍa island, sixteen cubits, indicating a flood of normal size, made the magic mark. When the level of the rising water failed to reach the desired height, it meant the water would be insufficient to fill the irrigation canals. This, in turn, meant a bad harvest, shortage of food,

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[11] The Egyptians'—and the Middle-Eastern consumers' in general—refraining from eating raw foods such as meat, fish, vegetables, possibly also eggs, and generally milk, seems to have been naturally linked to climate considerations. However, there is an interesting coincidence between the Middle Easterners' rejection of raw edibles and the Greco-Islamic dietary-philosophical doctrine which would not allow the raw edibles to be considered food: "Even if the food and drink are similar to the bodily material and complexion to the utmost, they are not nutritive unless they are cooked and become adjusted to the organs, and ripen;" see Isḥāq Ibn ʿAlī ar-Ruhāwī, *The Conduct of the Physician: Adab aṭ-Ṭabīb* [*Reproduced from MS 1685 Selimiye Library, Edirne*], ed. Fuat Sezgin, Series C. Facsimile Editions, vol. 18 (Frankfurt am Main: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, 1985), 33; Engl. transl. in Martin Levey, "Medical Ethics of Medieval Islam, with Special Reference to al-Ruhāwī's 'Practical Ethics of the Physician'," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 57/3 (1967): 27; "Real foods are substances which are distinguished from edible matter by first, second, and third cooking, and their superfluities, which are not eaten, are thrown away;" ʿAlī ar-Ruhāwī, *Adab aṭ-Ṭabīb*, 59; Engl. transl. in Levey, "Medical Ethics," 36. Whether this doctrine influenced people's dietary habits is, however, difficult to say. On the Greek influence (in the form of the Galenic doctrine of humoral pathology) on the shaping of the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary theory and practice see below, chapter I.1.B. "Extra-Egyptian influences," pp. 75–8.

[12] For a concise survey of the inundation calendar see for example, Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15, 21–2; Lev, "Regime," 150; Lane, *Manners*, 11–12; Raymond, *Cairo*, 3. Also Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 31–40.

social unrest, often famine, and, in extreme cases, cannibalism.[13] Whatever drawbacks the Nile valley had, its fertility was indisputable—compared to other countries of the region, Egypt could be perceived as an agricultural paradise on earth.

During over three millennia of its ancient history, there was little fundamental change in Egypt. Its basic population[14] proved remarkably resilient, assimilating its resident conquerors. Hyksos, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans, however isolated some of them planned to remain, were all captivated by the Egyptian way of life.[15] So were, later on, the Byzantines and, still later, the Arabs who in the early 20s/640s took Egypt over from the latter. The same applied to other Muslim migrants who kept arriving at Egypt throughout the Middle Ages and who all proved susceptible to the Egyptian *genius loci*.[16] When the Muslim Arabs appeared in Egypt, its population, mostly Christian by that time,[17] was as little vulnerable to change as it had been so far. But the Arab-Muslim conquerors did not mean to change the Egyptians and preferred to live in symbiosis with the local culture.[18] The Islamization of the country was hardly consid-

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[13] For a detailed discussion on the Nile irrigation system and the Arabic records referring to it see Stuart T. Borsch, "Nile Floods and the Irrigation System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt," *MSR* 4 (2000): 131–45; *EI*², V, "Māʾ," 'Pre-20th Century Irrigation in Egypt' by H. Rabie.

[14] For detailed discussion on the population of ancient Egypt see, for example, Andrzej Wiercinski, "The Analysis of Racial Structure of Early Dynastic Populations in Egypt," *Materiały i Prace Antropologiczne* 71 (1965), 3–48; Julia Zabłocka, *Historia Bliskiego Wschodu w starożytności*, (Wrocław: ZN im. Ossolińskich-Wydawnictwo, 1987), 69–78; S.R. Zakrzewski, "Population Continuity or Population Change: Formation of the Ancient Egyptian State," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 132 (2007): 501–9; Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, I, 3–11.

[15] See Phyllis Pray Bober, *Art, Culture and Cuisine: Ancient and Medieval Gastronomy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 28–9. For discussion on Greek and Roman Egypt see, for example, Bagnall, *Egypt, passim*; A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs: 332 BC–AD 642 from Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); R.K. Ritner, "Egypt under the Roman Rule: the Legacy of Ancient Egypt," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. I, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1–33.

[16] Cf. Ulrich Haarmann, "Regional Sentiment in Medieval Islamic Egypt," *BSOAS* 43 (1980): 55.

[17] On Egypt under the Byzantines and the Christianization of Egypt see W.E. Kaegi, "Egypt on the Eve of the Muslim Conquest," in Petry, *Cambridge History of Egypt I*, 34–61; Bagnall, *Egypt*, 230–309; Bowman, *Egypt*, 165–202; Terry G. Wilfong, "The Non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities," in Petry, *Cambridge History of Egypt I*, 175–97; Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 1–22.

[18] Cf. Susan Jane Staffa, *Conquest and Fusion. The Social Evolution of Cairo A.D. 642–1850. Social, Economic and Political Studies of the Middle East* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), 17, 25.

ered by them, if only because of the income derived from taxes for which non-Muslims were specifically liable.[19] The symbiotic attitude of the Arabs notwithstanding, they generated, albeit somewhat unintentionally, two major modifications of their new habitat. First, they set in motion a process of urbanization of the area where the al-Fusṭāṭ camp was established. Second, they started the process of constant influx of multiethnic settlers and residents into the place.

In fact, the Arab newcomers themselves were far from being an ethnic or cultural monolith. The warriors who came to Egypt with the expeditionary force of ʿAmr belonged to many different tribes and originated from different regions of the Arabian Peninsula.[20] Most of the tribes had separate *khiṭaṭ*, or quarters, allotted in the camp.[21] The settlement of the troops participating in the invasion was followed by a long-lasting influx of population from the Arabian Peninsula and Syria.[22] The diverse tribal origin of the Arab settlers in al-Fusṭāṭ implied that they brought with them

[19] See Wilfong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 183; see also Yaacov Lev, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), 182.

[20] The most prominent of the tribal groups which camped in al-Fusṭāṭ were the so-called Ahl ar-Rāya ("People of the Banner"), the main squad of the conquering army that consisted of a number of clans and tribes. The leading ones among them were the prophet Muḥammad's kinsmen, the Quraysh tribe, as well as the rivaling Anṣār, Muḥammad's supporters from Medina. The aristocracy of the former ruled Mecca and made money on trade, while the latter included Banū Aws and Banū Khazraj, two southern Arabian tribes which, having settled in Medina, made their living by cultivating date palm groves. Other components of the Ahl ar-Rāya group were the northern Arabian Ghifār and Jarīsh, branches of the Kināna, and Thaqīf, ʿAbs, Tamīm, as well as southern Arabian Aslam, Juhayna, Kalb and Balī. There were also some non-Arab clients. Relatively few among the early Fusṭāṭis were the northern Arabian Bedouins—it seems that the Qaysits were represented here only by ʿAdawān, Fahm, and a contingent of Hudhayl. The southern Arabs were represented by the ʿAzd with their sub-tribes, Judhām with their sub-tribes, the famous Ḥimyar with their sub-tribes, Kinda with their sub-tribes, the Lakhm with their sub-tribes, as well as the tribal groups al-Quḍāʿa and Madhhij. For a detailed presentation of the Arab settlers in al-Fusṭāṭ see Władysław Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ. It's Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1982), 93–7.

[21] *Khiṭṭa* (pl. *khiṭaṭ*) was a term used in reference to the lands allotted to tribal groups and individuals in the garrison cities founded by the Arabs at the time of the conquests; see *EI*², V, "Khiṭṭa" by P. Crone. For a more detailed discussion of the *khiṭaṭ* of al-Fusṭāṭ see Sayyid, *Capitale*, 24.

[22] Since, in this initial stage of the Arab conquests, the troops were either accompanied or followed by trains of their families carrying all their property with them, the process of settlement soon embraced the populations of entire clans. The immigration of the new Arab settlers lasted, with varying intensity, throughout the Umayyad era. The number of Arabs was constantly increasing also due to the high birthrate (over 2.5 percent annually); on the influx of the population from Arabia and Syria and the demographic evolution of the al-Fusṭāṭ area, see Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 120–7.

to their new home considerably different cultural traditions.[23] The differences were sometimes radical, as those between sedentary and nomad tribes, or between cultivators and pastoralists, to mention the most obvious oppositions. Cultural dissimilarities, that is those pertaining to the ways of life and behavior as inherited from previous generations, went hand in hand with antagonisms stemming from the tribes' different genealogies. Moreover, each tribe had, naturally enough, its own interests and thus its own political inclinations and antipathies. Although Islam was to unite the Arabs over tribal divisions, each individual continued to identify, traditionally, with his own tribe.[24] In the initial period of the history of al-Fusṭāṭ, it was those tribesmen's manners, customs, usages, practices, values, and tastes that, endorsed by, or combined with, the rules of the new religion, formed a significant part of the culture of the newly born urban community.

Of the non-Arab settlers in al-Fusṭāṭ, there were two contingents, possibly ca. 500 men, of the Byzantine converts to Islam,[25] and the Banū Rūbīl contingent of converted Jews who could have numbered as many as 1,000 men. Other non-Arab groups included the Persians who once formed a Sasanian garrison in San'a, and al-Ḥabash, the Ethiopians or Nubians who settled on the Giza bank of the Nile. It is not clear whether the latter had converted to Islam or not. But the history of the Egyptian capital is not a history of Muslims alone—as in many parts of the newly invaded territories, in Egypt, too, Christians and Jews constituted overwhelming majorities long after the Islamic conquest.[26] In fact, early al-Fusṭāṭ was, to use Yaacov Lev's words, "an Arab-Muslim town planted in the midst of a

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[23] Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 93.

[24] The lack of unity between the Arabs (increased by the early inter-Muslim, political-religious conflict), from the very beginning resulted in disorders and tensions; cf. Staffa, *Conquest*, 21–3. The most remarkable and dramatic example of the sophisticated nature of the inter-Arab discord was the attitude of hostility between the Arabs of northern descent and those of southern descent. Going far back into the past, after the rise of Islam this hostility was enhanced by the rivalry that developed between the prophet Muḥammad's supporters from Medina and his fellow-tribesmen of Qurayshi migrants from Mecca.

[25] Banū al-Azraq and Banū Yanna (according to al-Maqrīzī altogether ca. 500 men) were most probably remnants of the Byzantine army, who embraced Islam and apparently joined the Muslim Arab army at Cesarea. Possibly of Syrian origin, they were settled on the northern outskirts of the encampment; Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 95.

[26] In Egypt, the process by which a small Muslim elite ultimately became the overwhelming majority took place only in the Mamluk epoch. On the non-Muslim dwellers of al-Fusṭāṭ see also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Locations of Non-Muslim Quarters in Medieval Cairo," *AI* 22 (1986): 119–21.

Christian environment."[27] Indeed, at the time of the Muslim conquest, the great majority of Egyptians were "Christians of some sort."[28] There was not a single, unitary Christianity in Egypt. The basic, somewhat oversimplified division was between an urban, Hellenized, Greek-speaking Melkite elite supported by Byzantine governors, and a predominantly rural, Egyptian speaking Monophysite majority persecuted by Byzantine authorities. Relations between these two groups were often bitter. After the conquest, the Muslims, who treated the Christians of Egypt collectively as *dhimmī*s, generally made no distinctions between the denominations. In practical terms this implied that the Monophysites, or Copts, were no longer disadvantaged the way they had been under the Byzantine rule.[29] No wonder, then, that the number of Copts inhabiting al-Fusṭāṭ grew particularly fast, so much so that they soon could transform into a numerous and influential community. Copts proved invaluable for the Arab settlers who, having little idea about the local circumstances and equally little interest in business or administrative know-how, needed all possible help. The Copts not only supplied the markets of al-Fusṭāṭ, but, having learned Arabic and soon becoming bilingual, also kept the new administration running.[30]

Jews lived in the area since Hellenistic and Roman times, but until the fourth/tenth century their community in al-Fusṭāṭ did not seem to exceed a few thousand families.[31] The local Jews, the majority of whom were the so-called Rabbanites, or those who followed the teachings of rabbis,[32]

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[27] Lev, *State*, 183.

[28] Wilfong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 175. The process of displacing the Graeco-Roman and indigenous Egyptian religious systems by Christianity that had started in the fourth century, was already completed in the mid-seventh century C.E.

[29] See Wilfong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 177–9. For a very good survey of the Byzantine rule in Egypt see A.E.R. Boak, "Byzantine Imperialism in Egypt," *The American Historical Review* 34/1 (1928): 1–8. John Moorhead rejects, albeit not very convincingly, the view that Monophysite Copts (and Syrians) defined themselves against the Byzantines and that they cooperated with the invading Arab-Muslim army in the interest of throwing off the hated Byzantine yoke; see John Moorhead, "The Monophysite Response to Arab Invasion," *Byzantion* 51 (1981): 579–91.

[30] For the discussion on the Egyptian Christians and their relations with the Muslims see, for example, Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 123–5; Lev, *State*, 179–94; Staffa, *Conquest*, 20–6; Wilfong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 175–98.

[31] According to Kubiak estimates; see Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 130. For the discussion on the Jewish community and its relations with the Muslims see, for example, Bagnall, *Egypt*, 275–8; S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. I, *Economic Foundations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 17–23; 70–4; Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 130; Lev, *State*, 179–89; Norman A. Stillman, "Non-Muslim Communities: the Jewish Community," in Petry, *Cambridge History of Egypt I*, 198–210.

[32] Karaites, who relied on the Bible alone, constituted a minority within the local Jewish community; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 18.

formed two groups, the Palestinians and the Babylonians. The former were the descendants of migrants who had come to Egypt from Syria and Palestine. Their liturgy was the one accepted in Palestine and their authorities were approved by the religious authorities who had their seat in Jerusalem. Their synagogue, called the Synagogue of the Palestinians, existed in the area from pre-Islamic times. The Babylonian Jews, whose ancestors had come from Iraq, had similar ties with their former homeland and with the religious authorities residing there. Their Fusṭāṭi synagogue was established, it seems, in the late third/ninth century by newcomers from Iraq.[33] The Palestinian Jewish community maintained very close ties with the Maghrebians, particularly Tunisian and Sicilian merchants, many of whom settled in al-Fusṭāṭ in the fifth/eleventh century, soon to become the community's most prominent members.[34] Actually, similarly close relations maintained by the Babylonian Jewish community with Spanish, Persian, and Iraqi Jews might have implicated the process of their settlement in the al-Fusṭāṭ area, too.[35] The local Jews, like the Copts, learned Arabic and took advantage of the Arabs' disabilities and dislikes.[36]

Despite their *dhimmī* status, the Jews and the Christians of al-Fusṭāṭ did not constitute isolated communities. On the contrary, their houses, built according to the same architectural style, often bordered on those owned by the Muslims. Their clothing seemed not to have differed much from that of the Muslims, either. Partnerships, both industrial and commercial, between the members of the three communities were not exceptional. They all used the same money, the same means of locomotion and they bought the same goods. Apart from certain religiously ordained specialties, their menu was, most probably, often brought home from the same street cooks and prepared from the same ingredients. Despite their own different community life and inter-communal tensions, the members of the three groups "mingled freely," to use Goitein's words, with each other.[37]

The coexistence and cooperation resulted in a good deal of acculturation in areas which did not pertain to religion or political authority. The

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[33] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 18, 19.
[34] Ibid., 21, 32.
[35] Ibid., 21–22.
[36] On the languages used in Egypt of late antiquity, including the discussion on the switch from Demotic to Coptic, see Bagnall, *Egypt*, 230–60; on the Arabization, see Wilfong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 183–5; Raymond, *Cairo*, 21–3.
[37] See Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 70–5.

Arabs, who soon appreciated the attractions of urban life, ruled and lived using Copts' and Jews' services and skills. Apart from those determined by their religions, the differences in various communities' daily practices started to fade. Step by step, one imitated the other's style, paving the way for the prevalence of common standards. As the indigenous Egyptians were not eager to leave their country[38] and, at the same time, they had nothing against foreigners living and working among them, in the short period of three or four generations that passed from the establishment of al-Fusṭāṭ, the original population of the town reached several hundred thousand inhabitants.[39] When in the end of the fourth/tenth century the town of al-Qāhira was founded north of al-Fusṭāṭ, the latter already was a cosmopolitan, multiethnic and multireligious flourishing commercial and financial capital of Egypt and one of the most prosperous emporia of the Mediterranean.

The original *khiṭaṭ*, or lots which in the days of the conquest were granted to tribal military groups, gradually turned into neighborhoods. As the population increased, the inhabited quarters were settled more and more densely, and the unused spaces between the cantonments were filled with buildings. In consequence, the almost purely tribal character of the original divisions was dissipated, and the quarters lost their cohesion.[40] Al-Fusṭāṭ became a complex of tortuous, irregular, unpaved, and narrow streets, the width of which did not exceed 5–6 meters, while many measured 2 or 1.5 m,[41] widening at crossroads. Buildings followed the street alignment so as to use every inch of land.

The houses of al-Fusṭāṭ were as varied as the society that resided there.[42] While, however, one can relatively safely define the dwellings of the truly

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38 Staffa, *Conquest*, 46.

39 Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 128. The great number of slaves, bought or gained as a war booty, made up a considerable proportion of the population of that time, ibid., 126. On the foreign professionals settling in Egypt in pre-Mamluk times see, for example, Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 50–2; Staffa, *Conquest*, 46–7.

40 Raymond, *Cairo*, 20.

41 K.A.C. Creswell, *The Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952–59; repr. New York: Hacker Art Books, 1979), I, 120.

42 For a comprehensive description of Fusṭāṭi middle-class houses see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 56–82. For a description of remains of "low-income" houses as excavated in the site of Fustat-C see Władysław Kubiak and George T. Scanlon, *Fustat Expedition Final Report. Vol. 2: Fustat-C, ARCE* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 11–31. As Kubiak and Scanlon observed, the edifices of Fustat-C "conjure a lifestyle at a lunar distance aesthetically, economically, and hence socially from that chronicled by Goitein;" see ibid., 11.

poor as shacks made of mud, reeds, and baked or unbaked brick,[43] the houses of the middle-class are more difficult to classify. A considerable discrepancy between archeological evidence and the written source material contributed to the appearance of two opinions regarding the domestic architecture of al-Fusṭāṭ. Generally, most of the material excavated in the site of al-Fusṭāṭ shows middle- or upper middle-class houses built around an inner court (sometimes two or more courts) with the layout of the ground floor suggesting a rather low structure. Antoni Ostrasz, who analyzed the archeological evidence collected by scholars working in al-Fusṭāṭ between 1912 and 1970s, cautiously estimated that the excavated houses had been, most probably, two-storied, with "the ground floor and one upper storey, perhaps with some small rooms on the roof."[44] And the same time, the accounts of the Arab and Persian travelers who visited al-Fusṭāṭ between the tenth and thirteenth centuries seem to point to something to the contrary. Their reports about tall, multistoried buildings (from 4 to 14 storeys, depending on the account)[45] each inhabited by a very high number of persons (from 100 to 350, depending on the account)[46] inspired Alexandre Lézine to form a hypothesis about multistoried *immeuble-tour*, or tower house, prevailing among the domestic buildings of al-Fusṭāṭ.[47]

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[43] See, for example, Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawāʾiẓ wa-l-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār* (Cairo: Būlāq, 1853–1854), I, 341.

[44] Antoni A. Ostrasz, "The Archeological Material for the Study of the Domestic Architecture of al-Fustat," *Africana Bulletin* 26 (1977): 82. The houses under discussion date back to Tulunid and Fatimid periods. Owing to the state of preservation of the houses of al-Fusṭāṭ, the archeological evidence for their height and number of storeys is exceptionally scarce.

[45] Al-Muqaddasī (the fourth/tenth century) speaks of 4–5 storey houses in which, as he was told, 200 persons could live; see al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm fī Maʿrafat al-Aqālīm*, ed. M.J. de Goeje (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1906), 198; Nāṣer-e Khosraw (the fifth/eleventh century) reports about buildings as tall as 7 to 14 storeys and capable to house 350 people; see Nāṣer-e Khosraw, *Safar-nāma*, in *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels* (*Safarnāma*)*: Translated from Persian with Introduction and Annotation by W.M. Thackston, Jr.* (Albany: The Persian Heritage Foundation, 1986), 52. Al-Idrīsī (the sixth/twelfth century) informs of buildings 5–7 storey high, in which 100 residents could be accommodated; see Roberto Rubinacci, "La ville du Caire dans la geographie d'al-Idrisi," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire. 27 mars–5 avril 1969*, ed. Ministry of Culture of the Arab Republic of Egypt (Cairo: General Egyptian Book Organization, 1972), 406.

[46] See above, n. 45.

[47] Alexandre Lézine, "Persistance de traditions préislamiques dans l'architecture domestique de l'Egypte musulmane," *AI* 11 (1972): 1–22. Laila ʿAli Ibrahim, apparently inspired by Lézine's conclusions, maintains that the Fusṭāṭi houses "must have looked very like the old houses that still exist in Yemen and Southern Arabia today;" see Laila ʿAli Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture in Mamluk Cairo," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 50. Albert Gabriel admits, however, that "tower houses" might have stood in parts of the city uncovered by the exca-

Interestingly, these two points of view, discrepant as they are, correspond, in a way, with what Goitein found in the Geniza records regarding the domestic architecture—provided we reduce somewhat the height of "*insulae* de Fustat" of Lézine's vision. Goitein was rather skeptical regarding the idea of tower houses. What he pointed to was the contrast between two types of houses: one was "the family house, often a compound of several buildings, connected or not;" the other was "the apartment house, usually of three stories built of stone and bricks, on the top of which one or two structures of lighter materials could be added."[48] In other words, the Geniza records, matching the archeological evidence for the houses built around one or more inner courts and the travelers' reports on multistoried houses (even though some of them exaggerate the number of storeys), allow us to believe that the "family house" and the higher "apartment house" were two main types of domestic buildings in which the broadly understood Fusṭāṭi middle-class lived.

From the times of the Islamic conquest Egypt constituted a province of the Islamic caliphate, and as such it was administered by the governors and troops sent there by the caliphs. Apart from many vital historical consequences, the system had its implications for the ethnic composition of the caliphs' armies garrisoning in Egypt. For example, the shift of power from the Umayyad Damascus to the Abbasid Baghdad in the mid-second/eighth century implied that the Arab troops prevailing until that moment in the al-Fusṭāṭ area were replaced with Turkish, Khorasani, and other non-Arab units brought to Egypt by successive Abbasid governors.[49] An even more significant alteration in the ethnic composition of the army came in 358/969, following the conquest of Egypt by the Fatimids. The Fatimids themselves were, it seems, of Persian origin, but to Egypt they

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vations; see S. D. Goitein, "Urban Housing in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times as Illustrated by the Cairo Geniza Documents," *SI* 47 (1978): 14; Lézine, "Persistance," 4.

48 Goitein, "Urban Housing," 15. This would also be consistent with the opinion of George Scanlon, according to whom "the moment higher building became possible (and they were a godsend in such a congested commercial and industrial entrepôt which had never thought to forego its inherited street planning) other solutions were incumbent. First the houses were planned as complexes, four to five storeys high, built around courtyards which generally contained a basin-system. More than one family lodged within, and ownership was divided." See George T. Scanlon, "Housing and Sanitation: Some Aspects of Medieval Public Services," in *The Islamic City. A Colloquium*, ed. A.H. Hourani and S.M. Stern (Oxford: Bruno Cassirer and Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), 188.

49 Most of them were stationed in the palatine cities created north of al-Fusṭāṭ, that is al-ʿAskar of the Abbasids and al-Qaṭāʾiʿ of the Tulunids; on al-ʿAskar and al-Qaṭāʾiʿ see, for example, Sayyid, *Capitale*, 28–67; Raymond, *Cairo*, 23–30; Staffa, *Conquest*, 27–49.

came from North Africa, the original seat of their Ismāʿīlī caliphate. It was also North Africa from where a significant part of their troops originated. The place chosen by the commander of the Fatimid army, Jawhar aṣ-Ṣiqillī, for a permanent encampment to garrison the soldiers was located some two miles north of al-Fusṭāṭ. Urbanized and named al-Qāhira, the place soon turned into a city which became also the seat of the Fatimid caliph and the capital of the Fatimid state. The new rulers occupied two complex buildings surrounding the square later known as Bayn al-Qaṣrayn, or "Between the Two Palaces." The rest of the *intra muros* area, divided into quarters populated according to ethnic and racial criteria of the troops, was to serve as army barracks.

Unlike the Arab troops of ʿAmr who settled in al-Fusṭāṭ, the army of Jawhar was not multitribal only—it was also multiethnic and multiracial. The core of it and, at the same time, its elite made up the Kutāma Berbers, or the tribe which had sheltered the Fatimids in North Africa. Apart from Kutāma, the North Africans who joined the army of Jawhar included also the Barqiyya and Bāṭiliyya tribes, both of whom established quarters (*ḥārāt*) of their own in Cairo,[50] as well as the Zuwayla tribe[51] who were also allotted a quarter of their own, Ḥārat Zuwayla, and whose name was given to one of the city's most splendid gates. Apart from the Berbers, there were also the Rūm, either European or Anatolian Greeks for whom a quarter, Ḥārat ar-Rūm, was also established in al-Qāhira.[52] And there were the Ṣaqāliba, probably eunuchs of mostly Spanish origin, who were quartered in Ḥārat Zuwayla, where a street (*darb*) was named after them. Between the 360s/970s and 380s/990s, the Fatimid army stationed in Cairo received new multiethnic reinforcements. Of these, the Turks established their quarter in al-Fusṭāṭ, where they intermarried with the local women.[53] The Daylamites had their own quarter, Ḥārat ad-Daylam, in Cairo. Furthermore, there were the Hamdaniyya who deserted from the Hamdanids[54] and whose corps was stationed in Cairo. There were the Ghilmān, units of Turkish military slaves, and the ʿAbīd, black slave troops whose massive inclusion in the Fatimid army by the caliph al-Ḥākim

[50] Yaacov Lev, "Army, Regime, and Society in Fatimid Egypt, 358–487/969–1094," *IJMES* 19 (1987): 340. For a more detailed discussion of the *ḥārāt* of Fatimid Cairo see Sayyid, *Capitale*, 172–86.
[51] For details on the regiment see Lev, "Army," 339.
[52] For details on the regiment see ibid., 338.
[53] For details on the regiment see ibid., 342–3.
[54] Ibid., 343.

proved destabilizing both for relations with the civilian population and with the remaining army units.[55] In addition, in the fifth/eleventh century the Fatimid army stationing in Cairo was joined by Armenian troops of the vizier Badr al-Jamālī.[56]

Al-Qāhira and al-Fusṭāṭ, the two most important urban centers of Fatimid Egypt, were very much unlike each other and, although their fates interwove, lived relatively separate lives. Cosmopolitan al-Fusṭāṭ, dominated by an easygoing middle-class,[57] worked, made money, supplied Cairo and, apart from occasional tensions and a few periods of natural disasters, generally enjoyed its daily routine and prosperous way of life. Its population increased from 100,000 at the time of Fatimid conquest to 300,000 at the end of the fifth/eleventh century.[58] Al-Qāhira, on the other hand, purely non-Egyptian in the midst of Egypt, and generally closed to civilians, was not really a city, and its inhabitants did not really form an urban community. With major part of its *intra muros* area occupied by foreign regiments, antagonized according to ethnic and factional divisions, with its focal point located in the two palaces of the divinely inspired Ismāʿīlī caliphs, the Fatimid Cairo was partly a garrison-town and partly a palace-city.[59]

This state of affairs changed dramatically in 564/1168, when one of the Fatimid viziers set al-Fusṭāṭ on fire so that it could not be used as a base by the Frankish troops who, under Amalric I king of Jerusalem, prepared their attack on al-Qāhira. During fifty four disastrous days the city burned to ashes and reportedly lost two third of its population. Some of the inhabitants, however, managed to evacuate to al-Qāhira, where they camped in the mosques, bathhouses, and streets.[60] The event, followed by the fall of the Fatimids and the takeover by the Ayyubid dynasty, terminated the prosperity of al-Fusṭāṭ and, in the final analysis, contributed to transforming al-Qāhira into a thriving metropolis. However, the transformation would not have been possible without Saladin, the founder of

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55 Ibid., 340–4; Staffa, *Conquest*, 76.

56 Staffa, *Conquest*, 78–80. On the non-Muslim dwellers of al-Qāhira see also Behrens-Abouseif, "Locations," 122–6.

57 Goitein, *Daily Life*, 11.

58 Staffa, *Conquest*, 74, 81.

59 There were, of course, merchants and craftsmen supplying the capital with all possible goods. Most of them, however, like many of the civil servants working for the palace and the state administration, commuted to al-Qāhira every day from al-Fusṭāṭ. Quite possibly, the same concerned at least some of the foreign and local scholars coming, from 395/1005 on, for studies and learned discussions to Cairo Dār al-Ḥikma, or House of Learning.

60 On the event see, for example, Raymond, *Cairo*, 75–7; Staffa, *Conquest*, 81.

the Ayyubid dynasty and its first ruler in Egypt, who decided to change the status of al-Qāhira and open the city up "for the housing of the common people and the throng."[61] Saladin's decision, and the destruction of al-Fusṭāṭ that anticipated it, made the habitation center move from al-Fusṭāṭ to the ex-Fatimid capital, and paved the way for one more shift in the demographic landscape of the area. For the sake of accuracy and convenience, the name "al-Qāhira" as used in the present study refers only to Cairo of the Fatimids. The name "Cairo" is applied to designate post-Fatimid city or the city in a more general context.

The Fusṭāṭi fire victims who had evacuated to Cairo were soon followed by migrants from the Delta and the Nile valley. Besides, the rule of the Ayyubids brought to Egypt a new ethnic element, Kurds, whose horsemen now prevailed in the army. Moreover, a Ḥijāzi contingent arrived at Cairo and was settled outside the gate of Bāb an-Naṣr, in the area named al-Ḥusayniyya. The Ḥijāzis built their tanneries there and manufactured leather products similar to those they had made at home in aṭ-Ṭā'if.[62] The true evolution in the composition of military and civilian population was, however, yet to come. In 640s/1240s, al-Malik aṣ-Sāliḥ, the last Ayyubid ruler of Egypt, bought a few hundred of Kipchak Turkish slaves in order to reinforce his own, unreliable contingents. When al-Malik aṣ-Sāliḥ died in 646/1248, those military slaves of his or, more properly, his mamluks, took over the power in Egypt and gave rise to the Mamluk Sultanate, the state which prevailed in Egypt and Syria for the next 250 years. From a demographic, ethnic, and social point of view, the most important of the rules governing the Mamluk system was the one assuming that being a mamluk could not be inherited. In practical terms, this implied that to reinforce the Mamluk army, a constant influx of foreign military slaves had to be assured, preferably originating from the Euro-Asiatic steppe.[63]

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[61] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 364; Neil D. McKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo: A Topographical Study* (Cairo: AUCP, 1992), 29. Actually, it was the Fatimid vizier Badr al-Jamālī who, a century before Saladin, made the first step towards changing the population pattern in Cairo. It is not certain, however, whether his opening of the city for settlement by "soldiers, archers, Armenians, and all who possessed the ability to build there" (McKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 28) made any significant numbers of non-military and/or non-administrative personnel settle in Cairo.

[62] McKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 32.

[63] The system assumed that to become a regular full-fledged soldier of the Mamluk army one had to be a non-Muslim boy born in the harsh condition of (preferably Turkish) steppe, fall into the hands of the slave-dealer, and, finally, be sold by him in one of the Near Eastern slave markets. After some period of military and religious training, the slaves were freed, but they were not the same persons anymore. Their patron and their

Consequently, for over a hundred years slave merchants supplied Cairo with tens of thousands of enslaved Kipchak Turks. When at some point this trade contributed to depopulation of the Black Sea steppes, the Kipchaks were gradually replaced with slaves of Circassian origin. Although the two groups generally prevailed among the mamluks of Egypt, they were not the only ethnic elements making up the Mamluk army. There were also Mongols, "Rūm" (Greeks?), Slavs, Armenians, and Franks.[64]

Although it is often stressed that the Mamluks deliberately separated themselves from the local population, this was not universally the case. True, the Mamluks, as a foreign military elite ruling Cairo from the mighty Citadel on the Hill, might have generally despised the civilian and non-Turkish speaking urbanites. At the same time, however, most of the Mamluk officers lived, with their mamluk retinues, in town, sharing the urban socio-cultural space with the ordinary Cairenes. At the same time, many of the mamluks' children who were denied the right to become mamluks themselves, lived in the city and functioned as an inter-communal link.[65] The isolation of the military elite from the civilians was gradually reduced from the late eighth/fourteenth century on, when the mamluks, now allowed to leave the barracks and settle in the city, often intermarried with the local women and turned into businessmen.[66]

The ethnic composition of the civilian population of Cairo of that time was even more complex than that of the military elite who ruled it. Cairo, which from the 640s/1250s constituted the abode of the mighty Mamluk army, was also a flourishing metropolis of the Mediterranean and an intellectual and financial capital of the Islamic world. Relatively safe from foreign invasions, it attracted Muslims of all possible ethnicities and

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comrades were their new family, Islam was their new religion, Egypt or, rather, Cairo, was their new homeland.

[64] For a short survey of ethnic groups within the Mamluk army see *EI*[2], VI, "Mamlūk" by D. Ayalon. For a detailed discussion on particular groups see, for example, idem, "The European-Asiatic Steppe: A Major Reservoir of Power for the Islamic World," in *Proceedings of the 25th Congress of Orientalists*, (Moscow, 1960 and 1963), 47–52; idem, "The Wāfdiya in the Mamluk Kingdom," *IC* (1951): 91–103; idem, "The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom," *JAOS* 69/3 (1949): 135–47.

[65] On the sons of the mamluks and their role as a link between the military aristocracy and the civil population see, for example, David Ayalon, "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* II, No. 14 (1967): 322, 327; Ulrich Haarmann, "Joseph's Law: The Careers and Activities of Mamluk Descendants Before the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 55–84.

[66] See al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 214; cf. Ayalon, "Muslim City," 326.

professions. A detailed study of the geographical origins of migrants forming the civilian elites of Mamluk Cairo was produced by Carl F. Petry.[67] It is enough to mention that, beside the native settlers from the Delta and the Nile valley, there were migrants from Syria-Palestine, Iran, Anatolia, Iraq, Arabian Peninsula, al-Andalus, North Africa, and the Maghreb, as well as from East Africa and the Upper Nile valley, from where the black Ḥabashis originated.

In the context of food culture, a person's origins matter not less than the conditions of his actual habitat, if only because everybody generally misses the tastes and smells of his/her home cuisine. Many people and migrants in particular, try to reproduce these tastes throughout the rest of their life. In medieval Cairo, too, this longing for food one remembered from home made the foreign settlers tend to cultivate their particular eating habits. Generally, the foreigners who in the Middle Ages settled in al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo area tried to find local substitutes for their much missed ingredients. Since, however, Egyptian agriculture could not always satisfy their needs, what they imported to Egypt included not only their foreign culinary know-how and food products but also species of their favorite edible plants which had been unknown in the Nile valley. As the share of the non-local elements was particularly significant within al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo population, its food culture could hardly avoid being influenced by the ways of foreigners. True, in their continual attempt to reassert their identities which were being eroded in the conduct of daily life, various ethnic groups preferred to stick together, alienating themselves from the rest of city population.[68] Maybe that was why the couscous of the Maghrebians, the burghul of the Syrians, and the koumiss and horse meat of the Mamluks, never appealed to Cairenes. Generally, however, the migrants' own traditions were successfully inserted—through food stores, kitchen stands, and cookery books—into the urban space they inhabited.[69] The process was so effective that it finally resulted in the emergence of a foodstyle in which elements incorporated from other cultures prevailed distinctly over those originating from the local culinary tradition.

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[67] Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981); on foreign residents in pre-Mamluk Cairo see, for example, Claude Cahen, "Les marchands etrangers au Caire sous les Fatimides et les Ayyubides," in *CIHC 1969*, 97–100; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 49–70.

[68] See Staffa, *Conquest*, 90.

[69] This was despite of the fact that relations between the ethnic groups who tended to settle together with their kinsmen were, as S.J. Staffa indicates, "symbiotic rather than integral;" Staffa, *Conquest*, 93.

The diet of an individual usually reflects his social status, and one's social status generally determines his diet. Therefore, in the discussion of foodways of a city's population, one should not neglect the question of social order. In the case of medieval Cairo, however, the medieval European "gross division into an affluent bourgeoisie and the common people mostly doing manual work"[70] cannot be applied, if only because, as S.D. Goitein put it, it "does not do justice to many grades and shades in the texture of the society."[71] As a matter of fact, this is also one of the reasons why the problem of the Cairene population's diet, unlike that on many other culinary cultures, cannot be solved by using a classic contrast between the rich man's food and poor man's food.

Contemporary authors, who try to systematize the issue of the population of medieval Muslim towns on the basis of historical sources, encounter across various difficulties. They result, above all, from the fact that the old Arabic terms which refer to social levels are not always explicit and have no exact counterparts in the Western systems.[72] For example, the Cairene chronicler Taqī ad-Dīn al-Maqrīzī (the eighth-ninth/fourteenth-fifteenth centuries) divided the population of Egypt into seven categories. According to his systematization, the first category embraced those who held the reins of power. The second was formed by rich merchants and the wealthy who led a life of affluence. The third were retailers, or merchants of average means, such as the cloth merchants or small shopkeepers. The fourth category embraced peasants who lived in the villages and in the countryside.[73] The fifth was made up of those who received a stipend and included most legists, students of theology, and most of *ajnād al-ḥalqa*[74] and the like. The sixth category corresponded to the artisans and the salaried persons who possessed a skill. The seventh category consisted of the needy and the paupers, or the beggars who lived off the charity of others.[75]

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[70] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 76.

[71] Ibid., 76.

[72] See, for example, Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 75–147; Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1967), 79–85; Staffa, *Conquest*, 27–37; 62; 117–215.

[73] As far as the urban centers are concerned, the category of peasants who made their living by cultivating the soil was, generally, irrelevant. Although "the peasants generally did not belong to the society altogether" (Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 74–5), the migration from the countryside to Cairo should be kept in mind.

[74] *Ḥalqa* was a corps of free non-mamluk cavalry, with sons of amirs and mamluks constituting a special unit within it.

[75] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat al-Umma bi-Kashf al-Ghumma*, in Adel Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics: A Study and Translation of al-Maqrīzī's Ighāthah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press 1994), 73.

Generally, the socioeconomic systematization was not related to religious and ethnic divisions which split the society vertically.

Converting the old Middle Eastern categories of the social order into Western ones may raise various objections. Nevertheless, terms such as "middle-class," "bourgeoisie," or "working-class" are often used in scholarly literature dealing with the medieval Middle East, if only for the sake of convenience or clarity of argument. This is also why the term "middle-class"—unfortunate as it may sound—is used extensively in the present study. In the context of European history, middle-class could designate free town-dwellers who belonged neither to the ruling class nor to the class of common laboring people. If this meaning of the term is to be applied to the medieval Cairene society, one should remember that this society was very diverse. Therefore, the Cairene middle-class, similarly to the contemporary connotation of the term, has to encompass the sub-classes of lower middle, middle middle, and upper middle, so as to incorporate a broad socioeconomic group ranging from well-off businessmen, merchants, and master craftsmen, to various state and religious functionaries, to educated professionals such as doctors, teachers and scribes, and to retailers and petty shopkeepers. In the scheme of the Cairene social order, they fell between the working-class of manual laborers and craftsmen on the one hand and, on the other, the financial elite made by the court circles, big merchants, and the highest officials of the military, religious and administrative establishment. It is the members of this broadly understood middle-class who were the core of Cairene society; it is, above all, their food and foodways that the present study deals with.

As our knowledge of the residence patterns of the medieval Cairenes is rather limited, it is difficult to define which were the middle-class' neighborhoods of choice. The residential areas of Cairo were organized into quarters (*ḥārāt*), defined by al-Maqrīzī as "places where the houses are close together," and which, as such, corresponded to *khiṭaṭ* of al-Fusṭāṭ.[76] Similarly to original *khiṭaṭ* of al-Fusṭāṭ, the genuine military *ḥārāt* of the Fatimid al-Qāhira turned into neighborhoods in their time. Understandably, some *ḥārāt* were more fashionable than others, some were preferred because of their ethnic or religious character, or craft specialization. In the area of the Fatimid al-Qāhira the settlement was denser than outside it. Within al-Qāhira, the central zone of commercial activity, located along both sides of the main thoroughfare and stretching all the way from the

[76] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 2; I, 296.

gate of Bāb al-Futūḥ to the gate of Bāb Zuwayla, constituted the busiest part of the city. As a Maghrebian traveler observed, most of the Cairene streets were narrow, dark, crowded, full of dust and rubbish. The buildings, made of reed and clay, were tall and the access of air and light to them was limited.[77] Indeed, the extremely high value of land in al-Qāhira, and the lack of space related to it, forced the buildings upward and made them follow the street alignment.

As there was no division into exclusively rich or exclusively middle-class neighborhoods, the population of a *ḥāra* was not strictly homogenous as far as socioeconomic divisions were concerned. Within one quarter luxurious residences (*dār*) of the financial elite bordered on much more numerous dwellings of the middle-class. However, the dwellings of the middle-class were by no means uniform. Generally, the upper middle-class lived in family houses of various standards, either owned or rented by the tenant. Such houses usually included a reception hall on the ground floor and smaller rooms on the upper level.[78] Those who could not afford to build or rent a house—which was probably the case of a significant part of the middle-class—rented an apartment in a multi-unit building commonly known as *rabʿ* (pl. *irbaʿ*).[79] Built as investment by rich people, a *rabʿ* was an apartment complex with living units rented by the month. A *rabʿ* was usually built above a commercial construction such as a shop, *khān*, *wikāla*, or *qayṣāriyya*.[80] The commercial space was restricted to the ground floor, and occasionally the floor above was used for storage. There were no internal connections between the commercial space and

[77] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *An-Nujūm az-Zāhira fī Ḥulyi Ḥaḍarat al-Qāhira* (*al-qism al-khāṣṣ bi-l-Qāhira min Kitāb al-Mughrib fī Ḥulyi al-Maghrib*), ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1972), 23.

[78] As far as these small, or medium sized, houses are concerned, very little data has survived from the Ottoman period and nearly nothing from the Mamluk epoch; see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), 40.

[79] In the *waqf* documents, a smaller *rabʿ* is often referred to as a *makān* (place); see Laila ʿAli Ibrahim, "Middle-Class Living Units in Mamluk Cairo: Architecture and Terminology." *Art and Archeology Research Papers* 14 (1978): 24.

[80] In general, *khān* and *wikāla* were commercial centers, while *qayṣāriyya* was industrial. For characteristics of *khān*, *wikāla* and *qayṣāriyya* see, for example, André Raymond and Gaston Wiet, *Les Marchés du Caire. Traduction annotée du texte de Maqrīzī* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1979), *passim*; Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function and Meaning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 331–76 or respective entries in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. When a *rabʿ* was built above a *khān*, *wikāla*, or *qayṣāriyya*, there might be up to four such complexes—one on each of the four wings of the commercial building below, which corresponded to its rectangular plan around a courtyard; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39.

the living units of the *rabʿ*. *Rabʿ* itself was composed of a row of apartments reached from a gallery on the upper floor.[81] Each apartment was a duplex on two floors, with a separate, walled-off space on the roof. The lower floor had a latrine, a niche for water jugs, and a reception hall; the upper floor included the sleeping area. To save space, staircases were narrow and steep. These dwellings were extroverted, meaning that whenever possible windows opened onto the street, otherwise onto the courtyard. There was little furniture in Cairene apartments, mostly cupboards, sideboards, and sofas, fitted into walls or recesses.[82]

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[81] *Waqf* documents refer to three types of rental units: *qāʿa*, *riwāq*, and *ṭabaqa* (pl. *ṭibāq*). Of all the middle-class living units dating from the medieval period the *ṭibāq* units—the least elaborate and presumably the cheapest—were the most commonly used. For detailed descriptions of the three kinds of living units see Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture," 56–7; and idem, "Middle-Class Living Units," *passim*.

[82] Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture," 49; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39; see also below, pt. II, chapter III.2. "The dining-room," p. 383, n. 113. For a comprehensive description of furnishings in middle-class houses of al-Fusṭāṭ see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 105–38.

SURVEY OF THE SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE MEDIEVAL CAIRENE FOOD CULTURE

Since food and foodways of a historic population constitute quite broad and heterogeneous fields of research, the present study required using a rather diverse collection of sources. Indeed, as far as genres of literary production are concerned, this collection had to include items such as sacred texts, chronicles, travel accounts, fiction, *adab* literature, dietary and pharmacological compendia, as well as legal treaties, manuals for market inspectors, cookery books, and manuals of table manners.[1] These works were written or compiled by authors who were coming from various social, political, ethnic, and geographical environments, pursued various professions, professed different faiths, and belonged to various epochs. Thus the mentalities, the attitudes, and the motives behind their writings were different, too. Understandably enough, each type of sources, and each work within a given genre, has its specificity and differs from others as far as its usefulness for research is concerned. Each work has to be read in different way, and each requires different approach towards the information it offers. Many require significant caution and thought.

The following discussion, arranged according to genres, is aimed at explaining the general character of the corpus selected for the present study, and the way it was used. Whenever necessary, the problem of reliability of the sources is dealt with. However, the discussion does not go as far as detecting inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of particular texts, identifying borrowings, or discovering original contribution of each author. The works used in this study are simply too numerous and variegated, and information retrieved from them is often too fragmentary, to subject them to a comprehensive, critical analysis.[2] However, whenever

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[1] The present "Survey" does not discuss sources such as manuals of table manners. These are dealt with in a section titled "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," which opens chapter II "Sharing the Table" of pt. III of the book. In the case of chapter titled "Sharing the Table," which deals with table manners and eating behavior, the discussion on sources could not be separated from the argument, if only because a quite detailed reconstruction of presumed usages and customs presented in this chapter is based primarily on table manners manuals.

[2] However, the immensely rich historical literature of the Mamluk period was analyzed and thoroughly discussed in a number of excellent studies, such as Ulrich Haarmann's *Quellenstudien zur Frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag

the credibility of an account is particularly debatable—which may especially be the case with travel accounts or with records whose authors were not eyewitnesses of events or situations they described—it is stated in the form of comments referring to particular authors or records as used throughout the study.

The major part of the source material under discussion are records written down by medieval Arab historians, chroniclers, *literati*, physicians, philosophers, religious scholars, travelers, compilers, etc. Apart from a vast set of volumes which might be generally defined as "Arab" or "medieval," the material includes also items which range from the Old Testament, on one extreme, to early modern Western travel accounts and to modern ethnographic material such as Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* on the other.

Some of these records may appear too distant in time or space from medieval Cairo to be acknowledged as relevant for studies of its inhabitants' ways. Such doubts are not necessary, though, if only because the rules according to which the sources are chosen for reconstructing of a historical community's daily life differ from those which are de rigueur for studying political or economic history. In this respect, the history of daily life is in fact much more demanding but also much more liberal than event history. It obligates historians to inventiveness in searching for all possible clues, this way providing a challenging but often rewarding opportunity to rediscover hitherto neglected sources or to re-read the well-known records from different (that is more mundane and human) perspective.

In the case of studies dealing with traditional societies, the use of later sources if contemporaneous ones are imperfect or non-existent is not only a standard, but also an indispensable approach. Moreover, in such a case one also uses sources which precede (sometimes by far) a period we discuss, which is especially vital if we want to understand the roots of a custom or usage. Furthermore, these kinds of studies often encourages the researcher to make comparisons aimed both at showing similarities or differences between the cultures, and at identifying the specificity of the culture under study. This, in turn, provides the inspiration to examine

1970), Donald P. Little's *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography. An Analysis of Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1970) or Sami G. Massoud, *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian Period* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007), to name the most prominent ones.

records which were produced in places different, and often distant, from the place whose culture we investigate.

Therefore, if the thirteenth/nineteenth-century chronicle of al-Jabartī[3] or the work of Edward Lane dating back to the same period are referred to in this book, it does not necessarily mean the misuse of sources. Similarly, references to texts such as the apocryphal Book of Sirach or the Book of Matthew or to traditions of Muḥammad are not made to prove the existence of a custom or a manner in medieval Cairo. These kinds of sources, whatever their historic value, constitute records of mentality, usages, etc. which possibly prevailed in the region in more ancient times. As such, they may suggest certain conclusions regarding, for example, continuity, repeatability, uniqueness, or range of certain ways or attitudes. The same may be said of frequent references to authors such as al-Ghazālī, the jurist and theologian, or to al-Warrāq, the compiler of a cookery book, both of whom worked in Baghdad and belonged to the Persian-influenced world of the Abbasid culture.

While assessing the relevance of Iraqi, Andalusian, or other non-Egyptian sources for the present study, it should be taken into consideration that a historian dealing with the Arabic-Islamic world of the Middle Ages is in a rather privileged position. As a result of the Muslim conquests (ca. 11–133/632–750), the areas ranging roughly from the shores of the Atlantic to the steppes of Central Asia were brought together under one language, one religion and one legal system, at least in theory. Certainly, any real unity of such a vast territory was out of the question—from the very beginning, the empire constituted a political, religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic mosaic. With the religion of Islam and the Arabic language working as its universal culture-making incentives, this world, far from being exclusively Arabic or Islamic, was marked by a degree of what might be called "standardization" of many domains of political, social, intellectual, and material culture. Consequently, many problems referring to daily life of the faraway cities and towns of the Arabic-Islamic world were shared by the inhabitants of the Egyptian capital.

In this context, it would probably be in order to mention one very particular feature common for this part of the source material used in the present study that include medieval texts written by the Arabic-speaking authors. Interestingly enough, these texts, apart from advantages and

[3] ʿAbd ar-Raḥman al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Athār fī at-Tarājim wa-l-Akhbār*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Anwār al-Muḥammadiyya, n.d.).

limitations typical for written sources in general, share also an attribute which consists in that they hide certain aspects of information related to the diet of the populations they deal with. For most historians, the feature is not worth mentioning; for those dealing with food culture of medieval Near East it is important because it makes it quite difficult to define food choices and taste preferences of the region's inhabitants. The problem is of a similar nature to that which S.D. Goitein faced when trying to investigate the food culture of the Jewish community of al-Fusṭāṭ. In the course of over thirty years during which he studied the Geniza records, Goitein was unable to find "a single description ... of any dish or meal."[4] The food could be "variegated and refined, but its quality did not form a topic of polite conversation."[5] The reason was noteworthy: the Fusṭāṭi Jews "regarded speaking about food as bad manners."[6]

Interestingly, the Arabic-Islamic literature of the Middle Ages reveals some noteworthy parallels in this respect. The medieval Muslim Arab authors would speak and write on food, but they seem to have been not interested in recording their personal impressions regarding their own or somebody else's meals. Such an attitude was by no means limited to the Cairo—al-Fusṭāṭ area of the Middle Ages. The same concerned, for instance, the Arab culture of the Jāhiliyya, or pre-Islamic times. While commenting on the pre-Islamic poetry, Geert van Gelder observed that "numerous passages depict the cooking pot on fire. But the banquet itself is never described in any detail. The poet may depict himself as indulging in drinking wine, but never in stuffing himself with food."[7] As for medieval Iraq, the banqueting literature of the Abbasid epoch enumerates countless dishes and praises their colors, shapes, and ingredients.[8] Yet, even the poems and prose written by, for, or about, the Abbasid-era gourmets, were "focused"—as van Gelder observed—"either on the food and the

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[4] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 227; idem, "The Mentality of the Middle Class in Medieval Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, ed. S.D. Goitein (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 252.

[5] Goitein, "Mentality," 252. The Geniza proved not to be a good source for studies on the pleasures of the table. Unable to retrieve the most basic information from its documents, Goitein had to give up and, in effect, limit himself to writing about bread and wine.

[6] Goitein, *Daily Life*, xii.

[7] Van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 86.

[8] This demonstrates that the Baghdadi elites, unlike the Geniza people, were definitely "food-oriented." For a survey of the food-praising poetry of the Abbasid epoch see, for example, J.A. Arberry's introduction to his translation of al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 24–35; the most comprehensive discussion on food as represented in the Abbasid poetry and *adab* has been presented by van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 39–79.

paraphernalia of the banquet, or on those activities of the eaters that were not directly connected with eating."[9]

With talking or writing about eating being an unwelcome, if not taboo, activity all over the medieval Near East region,[10] there could be no Arabic Athenaeus, Rabelais, or Brillat-Savarin. In the history of the medieval Arabic literature there simply was no place for such authors. In effect, all we have at our disposal while investigating the food choices or taste preferences of the Cairenes is nothing more than very few scenes in the *Arabian Nights*, a few of the drug-induced sweet visions of Ibn Sūdūn, an educated Cairene hashish addict, and a number of recipes ending with an encouraging "and it is good" formula.

1. Cookery Books[11]

Cookery books are the most natural reservoir of the arcana of *ars coquinaria* as practiced at a given time and place. Full of ingredients and technical instructions, cookery books not only reflect the spirit behind the culinary culture of a given collectivity of individuals, but also indicate

[9] Van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 87.

[10] Searching for the primeval reason of such an attitude exceeds the scope of the present study. It is very tempting, however, to at least point to some interesting clues. One of them suggests that such was also the attitude of, for instance, the ancient Egyptians. Pierre Montet, a renowned Egyptologist, maintains that for the lack of sources he was not able to describe any meal consumed at home and that he knew only one (sic!) Egyptian relief representing a group of people eating. (Montet, *La vie quotidienne en Egypte au temps des Ramsès* (*XIIIe–XIIe siècles avant J.-C.*) (Libraire Hachette, 1946), 92). Phyllis Pray Bober who found another picture of an eating person ("one trial image on a fragment of limestone sketches a young offspring of Akhenaton gnawing at a whole duck") confirms Montet's observations, expressing regret that we know everything there is to know about the ancient Egyptian foodstuffs, but almost nothing about cookery and gastronomy. The Egyptians "are not shown eating, though food may be piled up before them, only engaged in pre- or postprandial enjoyment of wine." (Bober, *Art*, 29, 35, 37).

Interestingly, the statement seems to be valid also for ancient Mesopotamia, where scenes of festive meals that occur both in art and literature often depict food presented on tables or served by attendants. However, the Mesopotamian banqueters, who are sometimes shown drinking, are never depicted eating the food; cf. Bober, *Art*, 65–76; Dominique Collon, "Banquets in the Art of the Ancient Near East," in *Banquets d'Orient*, ed. R. Gyselen. *Res Orientales* IV (Bures-sur-Yvette: Publié par le Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1992), 23–29; H.L.J. Vanstiphout, "The Banquet Scene in the Mesopotamian Debate Poems," in ibid., 9–22; Andre Finet, "Le banquet de Kalah offert par le roi d'Assyrie Aëurbanipal II (883–859)," in ibid., 31–44.

[11] For a concise survey of sources for the study of Arabic-Islamic culinary culture of the Middle Ages see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien: Untersuchungen zur Kochkunst im arabisch-islamischen Mittelater: mit Rezepten* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988), 6–16.

what edibles were possibly available to these individuals. Moreover, they indicate possible attributes of their food and the way it may have been prepared and consumed. As this kind of information can hardly generate conclusive comments, one is sometimes tempted to overinterpret the data the cookery books contain. That is why old cookery books are sometimes used as if they were guides to what a given population actually consumed. However, they constitute a rather imperfect source of data in this respect.

This applies also to the medieval Arabic cookbooks, the Cairene ones included. While belonging to the genre which outlines the "foodstuffs available to the urban bourgeois social strata of medieval Islamic societies,"[12] they constitute an indispensable and irreplaceable source material to be used in drawing a culinary panorama of Cairo. One cannot expect them, however, to reveal the actual food choices of the Cairenes or conclusively determine actual techniques and kitchen practices behind the consumed dishes. Being prescriptive rather than descriptive, cookery books are similar to rules of the road or savoir-vivre manuals all of which, while referring to a given reality, constitute collections of prescriptions for certain practices and ways of conduct—the obvious differences between these genres notwithstanding. Elements of everyday life to which they refer—such as ingredients, kitchen utensils, and certain elements of kitchen practices and cooking techniques—can be deduced from these books, and in this sense they add to our knowledge of the medieval kitchen. But it should be also kept in mind that the prescription itself ("do this," "do not do that") is not necessarily a record of what was actually done.

Moreover, cookery books, historical and modern, usually contain hundreds of recipes, a significant part of which are never considered by their readers. Over 800 food preparations and beverages were featured in one of the books which circulated in Cairo, and all of them could not have been

[12] Manuela Marín and David Waines, "The Balanced Way: Food for Pleasure and Health in Medieval Islam," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4 (1989): 124. The efforts to define whose food was actually described in the medieval Arabic cookbooks introduced certain terminological differences into the problem. Charles Perry, like Marín and Waines, used the term "bourgeois," too, although in slightly different context. For Perry "*bourgeoise*"—as opposed to "an *haute cuisine*"—was "a modest version of medieval Arab cookery" that "must have coexisted with the richer style of the thirteenth-century cookbooks;" Perry, "*Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*: A Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 469. At the same time, what Marín and Waines call "bourgeois," Rodinson calls "aristocratic" cuisine, "a very wealthy court cookery within the reach of only a very small number of people;" Rodinson, "Studies," 148.

consumed by the city's inhabitants on a relatively regular basis.[13] The same must have concerned another of the Cairene cookbooks, even though its author stressed that his compilation included only "familiar" dishes (420 is the total number of its recipes), while he ignored those that "the people of this our time disapproved and found strange."[14] But on the basis of these cookbooks alone one cannot determine which of the dishes were actually never prepared and which, while existing only in form of recipes mindlessly rewritten by generations of cookbooks' compilers, formed a virtual part of the local culinary culture. Neither can one determine which dishes were appreciated and which were not, which were eaten only occasionally and which were especially preferred. True, certain preparations are described as "good." This, however, only means that somebody cooked these preparations somewhere and, possibly, that the compiler of the book might have eaten and liked them. But on the basis of the cookery books one cannot determine how popular the dishes were. In other words, on the basis of the cookery books alone one cannot determine conclusively what the medieval Cairenes customarily ate.[15]

If, however, one attempts to outline their probable diet, the cookbooks are nonetheless the crucial source material. It is indispensable, however, to verify which of the countless recipes corresponded with what the Cairenes actually ate. Such a selection of dishes can only be made by juxtaposing the cookery books with data provided by other sources, such as, in the case of Cairo, *ḥisba* manuals, dietary treatises, chronicles, travelers' accounts, as well as works of fiction and *adab*, to name but the most fundamental genres. True, such a verification is not always possible. Without it, however, the cookbooks can be deceptive, particularly because we do not really know whether the food eaten by the inhabitants of Cairo was prepared in the manner proposed in the recipes.

Our knowledge regarding the true role the cookery books played in the Cairene kitchen practice is defective.[16] We do not know their real impact

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[13] *Kanz*, passim; for short description of the book see below, pp. 36–7.

[14] *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʿat Taimūr 11, fol. 2; Engl. trans. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 301. For short description of the book see below, p. 37.

[15] Cf. Richard M. Mirsky, "Perspectives in the Study of Food Habits," in *Foodways and Eating Habits: Directions for Research*, ed. Michael Owen Jones. *Western Folklore* 40/1 (January 1981): 128. Particularly that recipes often had more than one version, each of which could be additionally deformed or improved by the cooks' own creativity.

[16] Cf. Rodinson who, while trying to answer the question about the impact of the theory of cooking on the practice of cooking, concludes that "it was manifestly important, though precise conclusions are difficult;" Maxime Rodinson, "Venice, the Spice Trade and Eastern

on the city's culinary culture: we do not know whether they indeed contributed in any way to shaping the menu or only documented the culinary tradition and practice of the region. Moreover, we do not know how popular they were, and we are not sure who their addressees were or who actually used them. The methods their compilers followed to collect the recipes (apart from copying from earlier works) are not clear, either. To solve all of these questions is far from possible. In some cases, however, the investigation is tempting, and so are the prospects of forming at least a hypothetical solution. This refers, above all, to the problem of the presumed addressees of the cookery books.

Obviously, the Cairene cookbooks were not compiled just for any reader—which was also the case with any other medieval Arab cookbooks, or to Apicius's *De re coquinaria* in the Roman world. In fact, it is rather difficult to estimate whether they were compiled for any particular kind of readers or even if they were meant for the kitchen use at all. Most likely they had a very limited circle of users. The most renowned scholars specializing in the culinary culture of the medieval Islamic world tend to define those users as "well-off and educated readers who lived in urban society,"[17] or "cultured urbanites,"[18] and suggest that the cookery books could have been composed "as guides for the smooth functioning of the domestic household."[19]

Indeed, this might have been the case, especially that the medieval Arab cookery books were far from being mere collections of suggestions on how to transform raw ingredients into cooked dishes.[20] As in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world food had not only nutritional, but also therapeutic application, most of these books included also references to the qualities, or "natures," of various foodstuffs (according to medical doctrine of Galen),[21] as well as recipes for dietary preparations for the sick and recipes for digestives, electuaries, potions, and other remedies the preparation of which did not require the physician's or apothecary's expertise.

Influences on European Cooking," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 208.

[17] Manuela Marín, "Pots and Fire: the Cooking Processes in the Cookbooks of al-Andalus and the Maghreb," in *Patterns of Everyday Life*, ed. David Waines (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 289.

[18] Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 126.

[19] ". . . where food in its broadest sense was of central concern;" Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 126.

[20] Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 124.

[21] See below, chapter I.1.B. "Extra-Egyptian influences," pp. 75–8.

Some cookbooks contained also information on what the proper conduct of the cook should be and defined the basic principles of his work; others included chapters on personal hygiene and table manners. Those chapters, although meant for the Abbasid-era courtiers,[22] could have been interesting and instructive for a cultured Cairene, too. Naturally enough, some people might have cared to possess a cookbook in their home libraries. Those who did, probably browsed the volume from time to time, if only to learn something or to find some attractive or curious dish.

However, as far as medieval Cairo is concerned, the city's well-off educated readers generally did not cook themselves. Some availed themselves of their own kitchen and stewarding staff, some used street catering services.[23] In either case, it was not them who applied the theory of cooking to kitchen practice. True, from time to time it happened that a rich man, or a person of rank, practiced cookery as a hobby—which was the case, for instance, of sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ who was said to have once cooked for his mother "with his own hands" and, moreover, set the table for her.[24] Indeed, amateur cooks of this kind might of course have read the recipes and enjoyed preparing them. To suggest, however, that such individuals were meant as strategic readers of cookbooks, would be a misunderstanding. Who was responsible for transferring theory from this kind of literature into practice?

The professional cooks seemed not to have read cookbooks. The Cairenes were not as demanding customers as the Greeks had been, and to be a successful cook in Cairo one was not required to have had "a firm literary background" or to study philosophy, astrology, or architecture.[25] The cookery books were not needed, either, if only because the cooks learned their profession through oral tradition and daily kitchen practice

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[22] See below, pt. II, chapter IV.1. "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," p. 389.

[23] See below, chapter I.3. "Street food business," pp. 100–5.

[24] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 929 (also mentioned by Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 212). From what al-Maqrīzī says it seems that sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ was not particularly fond of cooking itself, but generally liked to learn the professions from various craftsmen—cooks included—and then tried to do their job "with his own hands." On the theory and practice of cooking as exercised by the high society amateurs of the Abbasid milieu see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 24–6; cf. also Rodinson, "Studies," 96–9, and van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 39–74. It should be remembered, however, that the Abbasid Baghdad was very much unlike the Fatimid, Ayyubid, or Mamluk Cairo. After all, Baghdad was a place where a well brought-up gentleman was supposed to know the details of culinary art and of food presentation, and where a caliph could organize a cooking contest between his courtiers.

[25] Cf. Rodinson, "Studies," 96–7.

and not by studying written works and making notes. As for the craftsman cooks working in the city streets, they specialized in preparing one particular dish the recipe for which they knew by heart. The rank and file servants or slave cooks employed in the wealthy households had to be more versatile than their colleagues from the bazaar cook shops. But their use of cookery books was out of the question, too: first, because in most cases they could not read; and, second, because precious cookbooks were not simply left in the kitchen for them to enjoy and experiment with new dishes according to lengthy and sophisticated recipes. Of course, the cookbook might have been helpful in deciding what was to be served at the party next day or about the provisions needed for such an event. But it was not the ordinary cooks who were charged with these kinds of decisions. As any rank and file servicemen, they could only follow the instructions of their masters or of supervisors who administered the household for the latter: the major domo, the butler, the chief steward, *maître de table*, or the chef.[26]

Understandably enough, this referred not only to the practice of cooking itself, but also to all kinds of problems which constituted an inherent, if peripheral, part of the art, such as the cook's personal hygiene, washing the dishes, keeping the place clean, and using proper utensils. Also in this respect a cook had to be controlled by his supervisors and to follow their orders. Appropriate instructions pertaining to the proper conduct of the cook were often included in a separate chapter of cookery books. As was the case with the recipes themselves, the chapters dealing with the kitchen savoir-vivre and titled "What the Cook Should Know About" or the like, could not have been addressed to the rank and file cooks.[27] The latter were probably not supposed to study the kitchen regulations on

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[26] For the presentation of the staff working in the Mamluk sultans' kitchens, and especially of *khiwān salār*, literally *maître de table*, and in fact the chef, see ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī*, 85–99.

[27] See, for example, Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 8–13, Engl. transl. in Nawal Nasrallah, *Annals of the Caliphs' Kitchens: Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's Tenth-Century Baghdadi Cookbook* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 79–95; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 38–39, and Charles Perry, *A Baghdad Cookery Book. The Book of Dishes* (*Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*). *Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. al-Karīm, the Scribe of Baghdad. Newly Translated by Charles Perry* (*Petits Propos Culinaires 79*) (Blackawton: Prospect Books, 2005), 28–9; *Kanz*, 5–10; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 1b-3b; *Waṣf*, fols. 3–6, Engl. trans. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 302–5 (chapter 'On the Cook's Legacy and Culture'); Ibn Razīn at-Tujībī, *Fuḍālat al-Khiwān fī Ṭayyibāt al-Aṭʿām wa-l-Alwān. Sūra min Fann aṭ-Ṭabkh fī al-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib fī Bidāyat ʿAsr Banī Marīn li-Ibn Razīn at-Tujībī. Texte avec introd., notes et bibliogr. spécialisée par Muhammad Bin-Shaqrun* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1984), 31–2.

their own, or to implement them on their own initiative. And nobody would ever expect from them such a behavior. Similarly to *ḥisba* manuals which were written for the market inspectors and not for those whom they inspected,[28] the chapters dealing with the professional culture of the cook were not written for the cooks whose conduct was to be controlled, but for those who kept an eye on the latter and who were responsible for stewarding and administering kitchen and household affairs. This, after all, was not very different from the situation in the villas of Roman nobles or the manors of medieval Europe. Not many records exist to confirm the above thesis explicitly. One of the few is a recipe included in a Cairene cookery book of the Mamluk era which instructs the reader on how to write on a fruit. The recipe is unique in that it actually defines its reader:

> If you want to write a nice, green inscription on an apple, or on a bitter orange, or on a citron so that you can put them on a fruit plate while serving it and presenting it to your master, take lime, resin and vinegar, and write with them on a green fruit while it is still on the tree . . .[29]

Clearly enough, the text was not meant for the master. Just as clearly, it was addressed to a literate servant or steward. In other words, it seems that it was not only the cultured urbanites who read recipes. Some of their hirelings or slaves did, too.

Whoever really read and used the cookbooks in medieval Cairo, one can hardly avoid the impression that it was not any particular group of prospective readers that concerned or inspired their authors. Actually, the job might have been done for money or fame. However, with the oral transmission of the culinary lore still being the main and common source of knowledge about cooking and running the kitchen affairs, the cookbooks as manuals could not be too useful. Nor could they be a much coveted kind of writing—though a book of this kind might have been a nice curiosity to possess.[30]

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[28] See below pp. 39–41 and, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares, and market control," pp. 105–14.

[29] *Kanz*, 255, n. 724.

[30] The library of sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Najm ad-Dīn Ayyūb, for instance, boasted a copy of Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, which had earlier possibly belonged to the atabak of Mosul, although the identification of Masʿūd Ibn Mawdūd as ʿIzz ad-Dīn az-Zanjī, the fifth atabak of Mosul, is uncertain; see Kaj Öhrnberg, "Ibn Sattār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilà al-Ḥabīb / Kitāb al-Ṭabbākh*: Another MS of Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh*," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 26–7. Also ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī*, 40–1.

Judging by their own words, it seems that what made these authors compile their peculiar works was their appreciation of good food; this feature, however, was also interwoven with a passion for documentation and with the fancy to produce a book. In fact, each of them was driven by individual incentives. Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, whose *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, or "Book of Cooked Food," influenced many future Arabic cookery books, explained the motives behind his writings. This avowed gourmand not only "subscribed to the doctrine of the pre-excellence of the pleasure of eating above all other pleasures" but, for this very reason, also composed a book on the Art of Cooking, "both for his own use, and for the use of whoever may wish to employ it."[31]

The author of *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilā-l-Ḥabīb*, "Book of the Bonds of Friendship" or, rather, the one of its many authors who wrote the introduction to the book, was not only a gourmand but a hedonist, too. Grateful to God for all the earthly pleasures that man is allowed to enjoy, he clearly compiled his cookery book driven by the "feeling of adoration that enjoyment of good things strengthens in God's servant." But his gourmandism was of a highly professional kind: he claimed that whatever he included in the book had been "tested repeatedly and consumed in quantity" by him. And there was nothing in the book that "he had been unable to prepare for himself and check by taste and touch." Eager to express the "purest praise that these good things draw from the heart," he sought appreciation, too: "I hope that I shall attain the highest grace of God in recompense. I ask of God that he should render useful all that I have put in this work."[32]

On the other hand, the author of *Kitāb Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda*, or "Book of Familiar Foods," was not as emotional as he was reserved and practical. "When I saw that the learned had chosen foods and dishes which the people of this our time disapproved and found strange," he said, "I began to gather a book in which there was a description of the familiar foods, so that it would be easy to understand, gathering the meanings of the familiar dishes of this our age." To make his point absolutely clear, he added he "assembled this Book of Familiar Foods particularly for himself."[33]

Unlike the above-mentioned authors whom he preceded, Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, the compiler of the oldest extant Arabic cookery book, did not

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[31] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 38; cf. Perry's translation in *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 25–6.

[32] All the quotations from: *Wuṣla*, 479–80; Engl. trans. in Rodinson, "Studies," 148.

[33] *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʾat Taimūr 11, fol. 2, Engl. trans. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 302.

write in order to satisfy his own fancies. His introductory remarks, written in the form of a personal letter, read: "You have asked me—may God prolong your life—to write for you a book in which I would gather for you dishes that are served to kings, caliphs, and nobles. So I composed for you—may God prolong your life—a noble book, an elegant compilation in which you can find what is beneficial for the body, and from which what is harmful was rejected."[34] Clearly, the book was preordered. Who made the order is, however, difficult to determine.[35]

Some of the cookbooks must have demanded a lot of effort and dedication from their authors/compilers, particularly if they did not content themselves with simple rewriting and supplementing the selections from earlier works but also cared to collect recipes in the field or directly from the cooks and food dealers. But the final effect of their work is impressive. While intermingling the *haute* with the low, the urban with the country, and the local with the foreign cookery, the cookery books do more than profile the food available to the urban Islamic societies of the Middle Ages. Above all, they reflect the general spirit of the Mediterranean-Near Eastern approach to food.[36] The side effect of the methodology used by these books' compilers is that the language and the style of their works often vary from recipe to recipe. Moreover, their collections are inconsistent and sometimes quite confusing, as in one book one may often find a number of different recipes for the same dish, which is caused by the fact that one name is applied to more than one dish.

Of a number of medieval Arabic cookery books which survived till our times five will be analyzed here above all. As far as the extra-Egyptian output is concerned, the most important are doubtlessly the above-mentioned *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* ("Book of Cooked Food") by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq and *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* ("Book of Cooked Food") by Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Karīm al-Kātib al-Baghdādī. Al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, compiled in ca. fourth/eleventh century and bearing strong

[34] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 1 (cf. Engl. transl. by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 67).

[35] Al-Warrāq ends his introduction-letter with the words: "I hope the book satisfies your needs, and that you like it..." (*Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 2; cf. Engl. transl. by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 70; also a comment in ibid., 11–12). In theory, the second person singular may, of course, designate the average reader but the words "you have asked me" in the beginning of the introduction make it very unlikely.

[36] For discussion on the cosmopolitan character of the medieval Arabic cookery see Rodinson, "Studies," 148–62.

Persian influences,[37] is probably the oldest existing Arabic work of the genre in question. The manuscript, of which three copies are known, was edited in the late 1980s by Kaj Öhrnberg and Sahban Mroueh.[38] In 2007 Nawal Nasrallah published an annotated English translation of the text, with an introduction and excellent glossary.[39] As already mentioned, al-Warrāq's book was in possession of the last Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 646/1248).[40] As for *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* written by a seventh/thirteenth-century scribe we usually call al-Baghdādī, A.J. Arberry translated it into English in 1939. His translation was based on Daud al-Chelebi's edition of a manuscript dated 623/1226.[41] In 2005 Charles Perry published a new translation of the text.[42] Both *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq and *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* by Muḥammad al-Baghdādī, constituted the avant-garde of the Arabic-Islamic cooking theory and, as such, were extensively used by the later compilers.[43] This explains at least in part "a distinct, but as yet indeterminate, family connection" among the cookery books of the Fertile Crescent—Egypt region.[44]

However important for the history of the Arabic culinary literature these two works were, they are of only secondary importance for the study of the medieval Cairene food and food culture. Obviously enough, discussing this problem requires sources of Cairene-Egyptian provenance. Three of the existing cookery books seem to be particularly valuable for the purpose. These are: *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilā-l-Ḥabīb fī Waṣf aṭ-Ṭayyibāt wa-ṭ-Ṭīb* ("Book of the Bonds of Friendship or a Description of Good Dishes and Perfumes;" or "Love through the Stomach," according to another scholar);[45] *Kanz al-Fawāʾid fī Tanwīʿ al-Mawāʾid* ("The Treasure of Things Propitious:

[37] See David Waines, "Dietetics in Medieval Islamic Culture," *Medical History* 43/2 (1999): 232.

[38] Helsinki 1987; see also Öhrnberg, "Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb*," 23–35.

[39] Leiden: Brill 2007. A number of al-Warrāq's recipes was also translated by Lilia Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World: A Concise History with 174 Recipes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[40] See above, p. 33, n. 30.

[41] Arberry's translation, with an introduction, and with some updating comments by Charles Perry, was published in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery* as "Baghdad Cookery Book," 21–89.

[42] Blackawton: Prospect Books, 2005.

[43] Cf., eg., Nasrallah, *Annals*, 22–9.

[44] Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 124.

[45] The translations of the title in Rodinson, "Study," 116 and van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 2; idem, "Arabic Banqueters: Literature, Lexicography and Reality," in *Banquets d'Orient*, 91. A number of recipes included in *Wuṣla* was translated by Lilia Zaouali in her *Medieval Cuisine*.

On Preparing Varied Dishes");[46] and *Kitāb Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda* ("The Description of Familiar Foods"). All three were compiled by anonymous authors. At least two of them, i.e. *Kanz al-Fawāʾid* and *Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda*, appear to be of Egyptian origin, most probably Cairene, and date back to the Mamluk period.

Kanz, containing altogether some 830 recipes, is the most voluminous of the existing cookery books. Surviving in four copies, it was edited, with an introduction, by Manuela Marín and David Waines.[47] Like many works of this kind, *Kanz* is quite heterogeneous: origins of recipes which are quoted in it range from Baghdad, Mosul, and Damascus, to Yemen, Bilād ar-Rūm, and al-Andalus. As a collection of recipes, the book "reveals a family connection"[48] with most of the remaining items.

Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda, of which two copies are available, has been translated into English under the title *The Description of Familiar Foods*, and commented on by Charles Perry.[49] The core of the book consists of 160 recipes taken from *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* by al-Baghdādī; to these, the compiler added some 250 other recipes taken from a variety of sources, including several borrowed from a certain Ibn ʿAbdūn and meant "for the sick, and monks, and Christians during the Lent."[50] Apart from Perry's translation, the MS Ṣināʾat Taimūr 11 was used for the purpose of the present study. The manuscript is a Dār al-Kutub photocopy of the early twentieth-century copy of a manuscript completed in 775/1373 in Cairo and held in Topkapi Saray Library in Istanbul.

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46 English rendering of the Arabic title by van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 2.

47 Beirut: Franz Steiner, 1993. A number of recipes included in *Kanz* was translated by Lilia Zaouali in her *Medieval Cuisine*.

48 *Kanz*, 4.

49 Perry, "Familiar Foods," 273–465.

50 Perry, "Familiar Foods," 443. Ibn ʿAbdūn quoted in *Waṣf* is identical with al-Mukhtār Ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn ʿAbdūn Ibn Saʿdūn Ibn Buṭlān, an fifth/eleventh-century Christian physician and theologian from Baghdad. The recipes "for the sick, and monks, and Christians during the Lent" were taken from his *Kunnāsh al-Adyira wa-r-Ruhbān* ("Compendium for Monasteries and Monks") alternatively titled *Fī Tadbīr al-Amrāḍ al-ʿĀriḍa ʿalā al-Akthār min al-Aghdhiya al-Maʿlūfa wa-l-Adwiya al-Mawṣūfa li-Yantafʿu bi-hā Ruhbān al-Adyira wa-man Baʿuda ʿan al-Madīna* ("On the Management of Diseases for the Most Part Through Common Foodstuffs and Available Medicaments, Specifically for the Use of Monks of the Monasteries and Whoever is Far from the City"). Chapter "Fī mā ya'kuluhu al-marḍā wa-r-ruhbān wa-n-naṣārā fī aṣ-ṣiyām" ("On what sick people eat, and monks, and Christians during Lent") constitutes chapter 41 of Ibn Buṭlān's *Kunnāsh*. For the Arabic text see Samira Yousef Jadon, *The Arab Physician Ibn Buṭlān's (d. 1066) Medical Manual for the Use of Monks and Country People* (PhD diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1968), 317–30. For discussion of the MSs of this work see ibid., 41–94. For references regarding one of the five MSs see Brockelmann, *GAL*, I, 885.

As far as the seventh/thirteenth-century *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilā-l-Ḥabīb* is concerned, our knowledge about this work is a little bit confusing. Its numerous Egyptian elements notwithstanding, *Wuṣla* is generally considered to be more of Syrian than Egyptian provenience—originally it was written by someone who experienced life in Syrian Ayyubid courts rather than by a Cairene in Cairo. In the late 1940s it was studied and summarized by Maxime Rodinson, who also concisely discussed all of its ten known MS copies.[51] Rodinson's convincing conclusions suggest that *Wuṣla* "was produced during the Ayyubid period by someone who was accustomed to court life. It was a subject of several revisions, each adding to the original nucleus new recipes."[52] What is crucial for the present study is that among the possible authors of either the original text or the revisions, Rodinson includes not only the Syrian historian Kamāl ad-Dīn Ibn al-Adīm and an Ayyubid prince who was a grandson of Safadin but also, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Jazzār, an Egyptian poet and the author of the table manners manual of the early Mamluk era.[53] The highly probable contribution of al-Jazzār to some of *Wuṣla*'s versions, as well as the fact that among its conglomerate recipes many show the Egyptian origin,[54] allow us to include *Wuṣla* into the group of the Cairene cookbooks.[55] For the purpose of the present study three versions of *Wuṣla* are used: the Cairo Dār al-Kutub MS Ṣināʾat 74 (dated 703/1303–4);[56] the British Museum MS Or. 6388 (dated 734/1334) which was copied together with al-Jazzār's table manners manual titled *Fawāʾid al-Mawāʾid*;[57] and the edition by Sulaymā Maḥjūb and Durriya al-Khaṭīb (Aleppo 1986–1988).[58]

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[51] Sulaymā Maḥjūb and Durriya al-Khaṭīb, the editors of *Wuṣla*, mention the possible existence of the eleventh, MS copy of the work (*Wuṣla*, 424). Individual copies of *Wuṣla* differ from each other not only as far as details in phrasing are concerned, but also in the contents. See Rodinson, "Studies," 116–24. For detailed study on the origins of *Kitāb al-Wuṣla* see ibid., 116–31.

[52] Ibid., 129.

[53] For more on al-Jazzār and his table manners manual see below, pt. II, chapter IV.1. "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," pp. 390–1.

[54] Such as, for example, recipes for *harīsat al-fusṭuq*, *sitt an-Nūba*, or *asyūṭiyya*.

[55] Also, it was read by the anonymous authors of *Kanz* or *Waṣf* who used it to produce their own books.

[56] Discussed by Rodinson, "Studies," 119–20; 123–4.

[57] Discussed in ibid., 119–20; for discussion of possible authorship of al-Jazzār see ibid., 129, 130.

[58] The thesis of Maḥjūb and al-Khaṭīb that *Wuṣla* was compiled by Ibn al-ʿAdīm raises certain doubts. Their edition, preceded by a lengthy historical introduction (covering vol. I of the book), was briefly commented by van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 91.

Apart from the three works discussed above, one more cookery book should be mentioned here, namely that signed by Shihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Mubārak Shāh and titled *Kitāb Zahr al-Ḥadīqa fī-l-Aṭʿima al-Anīqa* (Gotha MS Orient. A1344).[59] Apparently produced in the Middle Ages (i.e. in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century)[60] and most probably in Cairo, it will be referred to below only occasionally, as much of its contents seem to be copied from *Kanz*.

2. Ḥisba Manuals[61]

The *ḥisba* books, known in the Western literature as "market inspector's manuals," constitute an exceptional source for studies on the menu of the Islamic urban populations of the Middle Ages.[62] The term "*ḥisba*" itself means, on the one hand, the duty of every Muslim "to order good and forbid evil" (*al-amr bi-l-maʿrūf wa-n-nahy ʿan al-munkar*)[63] and, on the other, the function of the *muḥtasib*, or the person who is entrusted with the *ḥisba*. The *ḥisba* books were not, then, really "market inspector's manuals," but manuals for state officials responsible for implementing the Qurʾanic rule of ordering good and forbidding evil in a given (usually urban) area. In practical terms, this meant responsibility for proper functioning of the city and its entire infrastructure. Therefore, contrary to the general conviction, the *muḥtasib* was not only the "market inspector." His duties, which could be characterized as being of religious-judiciary-administrative nature, involved controlling all possible domains of the city life, from markets, roads, baths, and bridges to medical care and public mores.[64]

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59 The copy used in the present study was rendered available to the present author by the library of Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg.

60 Cf. Rodinson, "Studies," 103.

61 The present chapter deals only with the *ḥisba* manuals in the strict sense. Specialized works on fraudulent practices, such as *Kashf al-Asrār* by al-Jawbarī, and works which include a general examination of the *ḥisba*, such as Ibn Taymiyya's *Ar-Risāla fī-l-Ḥisba* are not really useful for the present study and, as such, are not considered here.

62 On *ḥisba* books in the context of food production see also below, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares, and market control," pp. 105–14.

63 Qurʾan, 3:110; 9:71; 22:41.

64 For discussion on *muḥtasib*'s functions see R.P. Buckley, "The *Muḥtasib*," *Arabica* 39 (Mars 1992), 59–117; idem, *Market Inspector*, 1–11. Al-Ghazālī's views on the *ḥisba* are interestingly presented by Basim Musallam, "The Ordering of Muslim Societies," in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of the Islamic World*, ed. Francis Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 173–86. About *ḥisba* in the Mamluk period see Aḥmad ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, "La *ḥisba* et le *muḥtasib* en Égypte au temps des Mamlūks," *AI* 13 (1977), 115–41.

The work the *muḥtasib* was supposed to do was immense. The area of food industry alone obliged him to supervise hundreds of mills, bakeries, butcheries, shops, public kitchens, chimneys, street traffic, production and distribution of alcohol, water transport, and treatment of animals, as well as the behavior of peddlers and baker boys.[65] The *ḥisba* handbooks were to make the job easier and more comprehensible for him—they listed the principal trades and for each of them provided the *muḥtasib* with technical information meant to help him trace malpractices and exercise supervision over craftsmen, shopkeepers, etc.

The earliest of the *ḥisba* manuals which referred to the Cairene/Fusṭāṭi circumstances was written either in the final years of the Fatimid, or in the beginnings of the Ayyubid epoch, by certain ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Naṣr ash-Shayzarī.[66] The fact that the exact date of the manual's composition is unknown implies that we cannot be sure what exactly the author had in mind while putting down rules of business control. Were they meant to be applied in the town of al-Fusṭāṭ and the military-palatial complex of the Fatimid al-Qāhira, or were they rather written to help the inspectors introduce some order in the rapidly and probably uncontrollably developing Ayyubid Cairo? Be that as it may, ash-Shayzarī's manual provides excellent insight into the ovens, cauldrons, and pans of the Cairene bazaar cooks of the end of the sixth/twelfth century, as it enumerates altogether ca. fifteen names of food preparations (such as *zulābiyya* fritters, roasted lamb, roasted minced meat, cooked sheep's heads, *tharīd*, fried fish,

[65] Weeakly checking of scales and weights and ascertaining that merchants would not mix good products with bad ones were not his only activity in the field of food industry. The *muḥtasib* was also authorized to supervise public mores. In the case of food industry, this meant (apart from the question of alcohol) making sure that the miller's boy or street cook's assistant were young enough not to be attracted by women's charms and that they behaved properly while delivering their products to the customers' homes, where they often met the womenfolk; cf. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Naṣr ash-Shayzarī, *Kitāb Nihāyat ar-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba*, ed. as-Sayyid al-Bāz al-ʿArīnī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat at-Taʾlīf wa-t-Tarjama wa-n-Nashr, 1946), 24, Engl. trans. in *The Book of the Islamic Market Inspector* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 49. The question of the miller's or the cook's boys delivering products to private homes is frequently dealt with by Ibn al-Ḥājj in his *Al-Madkhal ilā Tanmiyat al-Aʿmāl bi-Taḥsīn an-Niyya* (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿa al-Miṣriyya bi-l-Azhar, 1929), IV, *passim*.

[66] Edited by as-Sayyid al-Bāz al-ʿArīnī (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Lajnat at-Taʾlīf wa-t-Tarjama wa-n-Nashr, 1946), Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 27–135. According to Nicola A. Ziadeh, ash-Shayzarī's handbook comes ("at least in origin") from the region of northern Syria; see his *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1970), 119.

maḍīra, *bahaṭa*, *labaniyya*, *harīsa*, lamb sausages, and *sanbūsik* pies or—more properly—samosas),[67] plus nine kinds of sweets.

As for the *ḥisba* books written in the Mamluk epoch, they name even more food items offered by the city's cook shops. Of the professions which were not named by ash-Shayzarī some 150 years earlier, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's (d. 729/1329) manual[68] mentions sellers of cooked livers (*kubūdiyyūn*), sellers of cold snacks (*bawārdiyyūn*),[69] and sour milk dealers (*labbānūn*). The section on cooks (*ṭabbākhūn*) clearly indicates that they sold boiled meat of choice (that is camel, mutton, goat, and beef), and that they still prepared a meat dish called *maḍīra*, like 150 years earlier. Unlike any other author, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa was patient enough to mention also over fifty names of sweets available from the city confectioners. As was the case of other authors of the *ḥisba* manuals, however, discussing the cunning swindles of confectioners was beyond his capabilities.[70]

Ibn Bassām (before 844/1440), another Mamluk era author of the *ḥisba* manual,[71] adds some more street dishes to those named by his predecessors. Significantly, all of them are commonly classified as food of the poor: boiled lentils, date porridges (*harāʾis at-tamar*), boiled hummus, boiled broad beans, boiled lupine, small salted fish (*aṣ-ṣīr wa-l-būrī*), pickled turnip (*lift mukhallal*), *kishk* (that is crushed wheat mixed with yoghurt and dried), as well as fried cheese and fried eggs. The fact that later authors amended what their predecessor had written does not necessarily mean that new dishes suddenly appeared in the Cairene cook shops' offer or that certain foodstuffs had not been consumed in Egypt before the ninth/fifteenth century. This refers, above all, to items such as milk, legumes, and salted fish that were known in Egypt from ancient times, and to cold snacks and fried cheese which were mentioned in the sixth/twelfth-century sources. Nevertheless, the fact that Ibn al-Ukhuwwa and Ibn Bassām mentioned them as sold in the Cairene streets is a valuable confirmation of these foodstuffs' presence in the city menu.

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[67] For more details on the dishes see relevant sections of chapter II. "The Cairene Menu: Ingredients, Products and Preparations."

[68] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Kitāb Maʿālim al-Qurba fī Aḥkām al-Ḥisba*, ed. Muḥammad Maḥmūd Shaʿbān (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1976).

[69] The profession was also mentioned in the documents of the Jewish Geniza of al-Fusṭāṭ; see Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 115.

[70] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 181–84.

[71] Ibn Bassām al-Muḥtasib, *Nihāyat ar-Rutba fī Ṭalab al-Ḥisba*, ed. Ḥusām ad-Dīn as-Sāmarrāʾī (Bagdhad: Maṭbaʿat al-Maʿārif, 1968).

3. Chronicles and Annalistic Sources

Due to their various traps, chronicles and annalistic sources (and the information they convey) require particular caution and alertness from the reader. Most of the time, medieval Arab works of this type are either universal histories or general histories of the Muslim world or of an Islamic country. As such, they start with the times of Adam or the beginnings of Islam or the Islamic conquest of a given country. Usually, they cover events up to the author's own days—or at least they are planned as such. Obviously enough, accounts of developments which preceded the author's maturity as a conscious eyewitness of history are compilations of borrowings taken from a variety of earlier works. Sometimes, the chronicler marks the quotation, this way suggesting his professional soundness and giving us a chance to check the original text, providing it exists and is available. This is, for example, the case of al-Maqrīzī quoting Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī's record on Fatimid palace cooks selling food in the Cairene streets (although otherwise al-Maqrīzī is not really a good example of an accurate and quotation-marking chronicler).[72] At other times, authors are silent about works they use, which becomes especially problematic if they remain the sole source of given information. In such a case we can never be sure how trustworthy their account is, if at all. This is, for example, the case of Ibn Taghrī Birdī's ninth/fifteenth-century account of the third/ninth-century kitchens of Khumārawayh's harem palace. Knowing Ibn Taghrī Birdī, however, we can presume that the record in question is not so much a product of the inclination to confabulate but, rather, of his "fuzzy and indiscriminate use of sources" as well as his strange way of selecting information.[73] However difficult to verify, such rare accounts, sometimes unique in preserving the otherwise lost records, are one of the reasons why we value some authors and their works.

When we discuss the value of a chronicle, we tend, as a rule, to appreciate it also for annals contemporary to the author's lifetime. In a particular way we welcome the originality of his information, and our respect grows when we think of this author as a possible eyewitness of events or situations he describes. However, such attributes should not exclude

[72] Al-Maqrīzī's credibility and his indebtedness to other authors were studied by Little in his *Introduction*, 76–80. Also Frederic Bauden, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrizi: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method, Description: Section 1," *MSR* 7 (2003): 21–68.

[73] Little, *Introduction*, 91.

the necessity of treating the work with caution, or certain suspicion in fact. Chroniclers were usually politically, fractionally, and religiously involved and, as such, were by no means impartial authors of unbiased documentary records. In their presentation of history they may differ as considerably as al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī differ in their opinions regarding the reign of the Mamluk sultan Faraj.[74] Being records of events and situations, chronicles and annalistic sources are also evidence of their authors' religious emotions, political involvement, and personal likes and dislikes. Such features should not necessarily be considered drawbacks which adversely affect the historic value of a text, but they require much caution and thought.

In the context of the present book, the most characteristic examples of the one-sided kind of accounts are probably Muslim authors' reports regarding various misdeeds practiced by the members of the Christian community and, on the other hand, Christian authors' reports regarding oppressive actions of Muslim authorities. This does not mean that Yaḥyā of Antioch's reports on the caliph al-Ḥākim's anti-Christian persecutions are unreliable, or that Ibn Kathīr's information on Christians marching along Damascene streets with a crucifix, insulting the Muslim population, and sprinkling mosques with wine is fictitious (annal for 658/1260).[75] It only implies that such records should be read in their proper historical context, with careful recognition of the specificity of the epoch, the particular social, political, etc. circumstances, the mentality of the people, and, also, the attitude of the chronicler. Therefore, second thought should be given to records such as al-Maqrīzī's account of Franks selling pig meat and wine in the middle of Islamic Cairo,[76] or of a high Mamluk official of Coptic origin who, having converted to Islam, defrauded the state and kept significant reserves of pork, wine, and salted fish (apart from two dead bodies of Turkish mamluks he had allegedly castrated) in his pantries.[77]

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[74] While al-Maqrīzī ascribes to Faraj the ruin of Egypt and Syria because of poor administration, debased coinage, corrupt officials, and oppressive taxation, Ibn Taghrī Birdī gives the sultan a most favorable obituary despite his observation that Faraj had brought about the financial ruin of his family and indirectly the death of his father; see *EI*², II, "Faradj" by J. Wansbrough.

[75] For more details see below, pt. III, chapter VI.3. "Alcohol and Its Consumption," p. 541, n. 251.

[76] See below, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 178, n. 198; pt. III, chapter VI. "Alcohol and Its Consumption," pp. 508, 539.

[77] See below, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 178, n. 98; chapter II.4. "Fish," pp. 220–1.

The above remarks refer also to various chroniclers' accusations regarding the presumed alcohol abuse as practiced by certain Muslim rulers.

As for the data regarding the culinary culture of medieval Cairo, chronicles and annalistic sources are not excessively informative. But this probably should not be surprising—after all, caring for the charms of food and recording personal impressions in this regard was not the chroniclers' job. Since the contexts in which the chroniclers mention food at all are economic, political, or social, not dietary or philosophical, it is probably natural that their references to food lack afterthoughts on foods' tastes, smells, or textures. Thus, while neglecting all possible attributes of food, they concentrated on recording its rising or falling prices or on defining its quantities served during a royal or princely banquet.

As for the reports on periodical changes of prices in Cairo, in the majority of cases, they refer to various ordeals or crisis situations. As such situations occurred in very precise moments in history, the data related to them cannot be applied to any other period. However, the value of these kinds of reports consists in that they allow us to define the Cairenes' most necessary food articles as well as their prices in relation to each other.[78] Sometimes, when such or similar reports refer to attacks of epidemic diseases which occasionally hit Cairo, they also become an invaluable source of information medico-dietary issues.

The way the Arabic-Islamic chroniclers referred to food served during formal banquets confirms the thesis about the excessive quantities of food being indicators of social status:[79] for them, like for authors coming from many other cultures, the quantity of food mattered much more than its quality. It is enough to mention al-Maqrīzī's description of an Ayyubid banquet held in 637/1239 to celebrate sultan al-ʿĀdil's II return to Cairo,[80] or Ibn Taghrī Birdī's description of sultan Barqūq's party held in 800/1398 to celebrate the victory in polo game over one of his officers,[81] or Ibn Iyās's description of a wedding party of *al-amīr al-kabīr* Nawrūz held in

[78] See for example below, chapter II.1.C. "Rice," pp. 152–3.

[79] About the excessive quantities of food as indicators of social status throughout history, see Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables. A History of Food* (New York: The Free Press, 2002), 101–30.

[80] See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/2, 290.

[81] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *An-Nujūm az-Zāhira fī Mulūk Misr wa-l-Qāhira* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.), II, 81.

804/1401–2.[82] However impressive such records are, they nevertheless give us certain idea about the menu of the ruling elites.

As far as the Fatimid-era references to food are concerned, the main sources mention food items in the context of either the caliphs' kitchens and their production or the events that related to the diet of ordinary people. Of the latter category, two works deserve particular attention. One is *Tārīkh al-Anṭākī* by Melkite Christian physician and historian Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī (ca. 370–458/980–1066),[83] a work valuable for its references to the alimentary interdictions introduced by the caliph al-Ḥākim. The other is *Akhbār Miṣr* written by Muḥammad al-Musabbiḥī (366–420/977–1029), a civil servant of the caliph al-Ḥākim and, what is more important, a chronicler of al-Fusṭāṭ. The preserved fragments of his work include references to the food shortages and increases of prices of food staples that occurred in 414/1023 and 415/1024.[84] What is particularly precious, they transmit a number of names of dishes consumed by inhabitants of al-Fusṭāṭ.

As for the Fatimid sources dealing with the menu of the royal milieu, two fundamental works should be mentioned: *Akhbār Miṣr* by Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾiḥī[85] and, above all, *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn fī Akhbār ad-Dawlatayn* by Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr.[86] As both Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾiḥī

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[82] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 638–9. For more examples of such an approach see also descriptions of Mamluk banquets in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 211 (a giant party held by sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl in 692/1292–3 to celebrate the circumcision of his son and of his nephew and, at the same time, an inauguration of his newly-completed Ashrafiyya palace); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 574 (the annal for 762/1361: a daily banquet held by *wazīr* Fakhr ad-Dīn Mājid Ibn Khaṣīb; on the food of the latter see also al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 29); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 288 (a 7–day wedding party of amir Qawṣūn); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 372 and al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 547 (a banquet held on the occasion of inauguration of sultan Barqūq's madrasa, 788/1386); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 902; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 383 (annal for 865/1461: a daily food banquet held by the sultan in honor of the caliph); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 151 (the annal for 915/1509–10: a big festive banquet below the Citadel); or Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 331, 357 (banquets held in honor of the Ottoman-Mamluk viceroy of Egypt, Khayr Bak, 926/1520); also ibid., 296; or description of the Mamluk sultans' daily meals by al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār. Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Ūlā*, ed. Dorothea Krawulski (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī li-l-Buḥūth, 1986), 104–15. For similar approach as practiced in ancient Mesopotamia see Finet, "Le banquet de Kalah," *passim*.

[83] Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh al-Anṭākī*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd as-Salām Tadmurī (Tripoli, Lebanon: Gurūs Burs, 1990).

[84] Muḥammad al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, I/2, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Le Caire: IFAO, 1978); the part that has survived covers only several months of the years 414/1023 and some of 415/1024.

[85] Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Le Caire: IFAO, 1983).

[86] Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzhat al-Muqlatayn fī Akhbār ad-Dawlatayn*, ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid (Beirut: in Komission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1992).

(d. 588/1192), a vizier in the court of the Fatimid caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh, and Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr (524–617/1130–1220), a high-ranking official of the later Fatimids, had a direct insight into the affairs of the caliphal palace, their chronicles offer rather unusual accounts regarding the production of the royal kitchen. It should be kept in mind, however, that most of their records concern festive occasions and not the daily routine. For studies on the foodways of the epoch, the value of the chronicle of Ibn al-Maʾmūn consists in the precise enumeration of food items allotted by the court to various officials or distributed on various occasions or presented on festive official tables.[87] The chronicle of Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, on the other hand, provides us with unique data referring to the caliph's food banquets held on *ʿīd al-fiṭr* day, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan.[88] No doubt, the list of dishes presented on this occasion to the caliph first in the *īwān*, or vaulted portal, and then in the Golden Hall, clearly indicates that Fatimids' cuisine was not modest at all. Yet, if we take a closer look at what the Fatimid caliphs and their entourage consumed, we discover that their food, even in its most festive version, was neither particularly refined nor diverse. The menu of the Fatimid elites—sweet, greasy, and spicy as it was—seems to have been far more modest than that of their Abbasid rivals in Baghdad.

Although the Fatimid chroniclers did not write about food with passion, the picture of the Fatimid elites' menu is rich, imaginable, and to some degree "tangible"—due, above all, to vivid descriptions provided by Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr. Compared to what is documented in his *Nuzha*, the accounts written by the Ayyubid or Mamluk chroniclers are rather indifferent, spiritless, and unimaginative. Khalīl aẓ-Ẓāhirī (d. 872/1468), a Mamluk administration official so willingly quoted as a fundamental source of data on the so-called "Mamluk food," is an example of such an approach. In his *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik*, a book picturing Egypt under the Mamluks, he included a list of names of over forty dishes—apparently consumed by the Mamluk elite—with no comment regarding them whatsoever. All that

[87] See, for example, Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 64 (food distributed on the occasion of *laylat al-wuqūd*), 65 (food distributed on the occasion of Nawrūz); 66–8 (food distributed on *ʿīd al-fiṭr* and other occasions); 104 (food distributed on the occasion of *ʿīd al-mīlād*). Also Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144–5 (food prepared for the month of Rajab); 182 (food prepared on the occasion of *mawkib*-procession); 190 (food prepared on the occasion of *ʿīd an-nahr*); 212 (food prepared on the occasion of *takhlīq al-miqyās*, or perfuming of the Nilometer); 212–15 (food banquet held on the occasion of *ʿīd al-fiṭr*).

[88] Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 212–15; see also below, pt. II, chapter IV.2.B.3. "Serving. Presentation and tableware," pp. 425–6.

he had to say about this menu was one simple introductory sentence: "following are the dishes prepared in the sultan's kitchens."[89] As if they were commonly known, or as if he did not care. But he at least knew the preparations' names and his list, spiritless though it is, is one of otherwise very few proofs that the food of the Mamluk elites was, in fact, quite diversified. Compared to al-Qalqashandī who could limit himself to stating that "variety of foods" were served at an official royal banquet,[90] aẓ-Ẓāhirī seems quite demonstrative.

Although the Mamluks in general must have been less fastidious about food than, for example, the Abbasids, some of their sultans surely cared what they ate. Lack of sufficient evidence makes it impossible to compose a list of royal Mamluk gourmets. One can presume, however, that at least sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad was one of them. When in 719/1319–20 he decided to make a pilgrimage to the Hijaz, a lot of effort was put in equipping his caravan with all that a moveable royal kitchen may have needed. Apart from regular kitchen utensils, such as golden, silver, and copper pots and portable ovens, camels also carried wooden containers (actually flowerpots), in which herbs and vegetables were planted, and special servants were appointed to water the plants and care for them. The sultan, apparently, liked to have his leeks, coriander, mint, basil, and other seasonings, fresh.[91]

4. Travelers' Accounts

After the Crusades were over, Europeans became more and more often represented in Cairo by civilian pilgrims who visited the city on their way to the Holy Land. With time, the profile of European visitors changed: in the modern era pilgrims were replaced by all kinds of scholars, artists,

[89] Khalīl aẓ-Ẓāhirī, *Kitāb Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik wa-Bayān aṭ-Ṭuruq wa-l-Masālik*, ed. P. Ravesse, (Paris, 1894; 2nd ed. Cairo: Dār al-ʿArab li-l-Bustānī, 1988), 125; for more on the author and the book see *EI²*, III, "Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī" by J. Gaulmier and T. Fahd. Interestingly, similar attitude was also typical for Ibn Ṭawq, a Damascene religious official living in the end of the Mamluk era, and the author of a unique diary. True, he was not rich enough to enjoy good food too frequently. When he finally had a chance to do so, however, all he was able to put down in this respect was to name the dishes which were served at the banquet; see Ibn Ṭawq, *Yawmiyyāt Shihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq (834–915/1430–1509). Mudhakkirāt Kutibat bi-Dimashq fī Awākhir al-ʿAhd al-Mamlūkī, 885–908/1480–1502*, ed. ash-Shaykh Jaʿfar al-Mujāhir (Damascus: IFPO, 2000–2007), IV, 1601.

[90] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā fī Ṣināʿat al-Inshāʾ* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.), IV, 57.

[91] Sweets, sugar, fruits, almonds, and fowl were delivered from Damascus; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 58; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 196.

adventurers, tourists, soldiers of the occupying armies, as well as civil servants and their families. Besides, countless merchants and diplomats came to Cairo throughout history, either to complete some short mission or to reside for longer period. Many of those visitors wrote down the accounts of their stay in the Egyptian capital, and some also made illustrations.[92]

The medieval and early modern European visitors to Cairo, many of whom were pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, generally traveled by sea to Alexandria and then by river boat to Cairo, where they usually stayed for a number of days. Then, across the desert, they went to the Palestine via St. Catherine convent in the Sinai. The Europe-Palestine pilgrim tours going through Cairo involved obligatory sight-seeing of the locales and monuments associated with the Biblical narratives.[93] In their accounts, majority of travelers did not confine themselves to narratives dealing with the local Holy Places. More or less deeply moved by what they saw around them, they would also describe and comment on anything that was new, surprising, intriguing, or simply unfamiliar.

The reasons for which Muslims visited Cairo were somewhat more complex than the motivations of Europeans, if only because of this particular ethos of "traveling in search of knowledge" (*riḥla fī ṭalab al-ʿilm*) which their religion promoted.[94] Apart from this canonized travel impetus, people, of course, had their particular inspirations. During its first two centuries of existence, Cairo, the seat of the divinely inspired Fatimid caliphs, attracted primarily those who shared pro-Ismāʿīlī sympathies. Thus the city became the destination for travelers such as Ibn Ḥawqal, an Iraqi merchant and geographer, or Nāṣer-e Khosraw, a Persian poet,

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[92] For a detailed survey of medieval and post-medieval English travelers and their works, and for explanation of the motives behind their travels to the Near East, see Mohamad Ali Hachicho, "English Travel Books about the Arab Near East in the Eighteenth Century," *Die Welt des Islams* (New Series) IX, 1/4 (1964): 1–206.

[93] The European pilgrim would primarily write about the churches of Cairo and about the pyramids which, as he was informed, were the granaries of pharaoh referred to in Genesis (41:5–7; 22–24). He would also report about the miraculous balm tree in Maṭariyya, where the Holy Family reportedly stayed during their flight from Herod's soldiers. But the Cairene guides would also show Europeans some local curiosities of a more mundane character. Consequently, majority of travel accounts of the pre-modern era include more or less detailed descriptions of giraffes and other animals, of chicken incubators, of the Nilometer, and of exotic plants/fruits, particularly banana, "a fruit with which Adam sinned." Some also explain the question of the annual flood.

[94] The Prophet's insistence upon the believers to "seek knowledge even in China" is considered to be the motive behind the Muslims' wanderlust for the sake of *ṭalab al-ʿilm*. Such a journey, which one could perform either as a teacher, or as a student, or both, could take decades.

prose writer, philosopher, and an Ismāʿīlī missionary (*dāʿī*). This might have also been the case of the Syro-Palestinian geographer Shams ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Muqaddasī, whose Shiʿī inclinations cannot be excluded.[95]

ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, a doctor and an erudite from Abbasid Baghdad, who traveled in the Near East in quest for medico-philosophical knowledge, went to Egypt to meet scholarly authorities, to discuss, and to study. He came to Cairo in 590s/1190s and left the city after the great famine of 597–598/1200–1202. His account of this visit, titled *Kitāb al-Ifāda wa-l-Iʿtibār*, is unusual in that it combines a journey diary and a chronicle of natural disaster with a professional dietician's commentary. Looking at plants and dishes with the eye of a scholar educated in Graeco-Islamic tradition, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf managed to verify basic qualities of certain foodstuffs consumed in Egypt. These qualities include details such as the form, color, and consistency and taste before and after cooking, as well as information regarding the digestion of particular items.[96]

For many famous Muslim travelers, such as Ibn Jubayr, an Andalusian, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, a Maghrebian, and Ibn Saʿīd, a Maghrebian also, Cairo was a stop on their way to Mecca. When Leo Africanus, a refugee from al-Andalus, and a traveler, visited Egypt in 1517, he was on his way to Mecca, too. Somewhat atypically, his journey ended in Rome with Africanus's conversion to Christianity. Nevertheless, he managed to complete a great travel account which included a unique report of the fall of the Mamluks which he happened to witness while in Cairo. Muṣṭafā ʿAlī of Gallipoli, an Ottoman official, stayed in Cairo for "one or two months" while on his way to Jedda, where he was to take over the position of administrator of revenues. Unlike travelers or geographers whose reports on Cairo constitute fragments of bigger works, Muṣṭafā ʿAlī devoted an entire book to the description of the city.

One of the features of a travel account is that its author perceives and describes the unknown through the looking glass of his own culture. Sometimes biased against alien, exotic surroundings, at other times

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95 On al-Muqaddasī's Shiʿi affiliation see Régis Blachère, "L'agglomération du Caire vue par quatre voyageurs arabes du Moyen Âge," *AI* 8 (1969): 2.

96 ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Ifādah wa'l-Iʿtibār*, in *The Eastern Key. Kitāb al-Ifādah wa'l-Iʿtibār of ʿAbd al-Latīf al-Baghdādi*, ed. and trans. into English Kamal Hafuth Zand and John A. and Ivy E. Videan (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965). Al-Baghdādī discussed food either in the chapter on edible plants, or in a special chapter devoted to "foods peculiar to Egypt." The author's shocking reports of cannibalism which occurred during the famine of 597–598/1200–1202 deserve special attention and are not dealt with in the present study.

bewildered, inquisitive, or naïve, he always writes his account according to the mentality and modes of thought which are peculiar for his homeland and his epoch. Such an attitude could manifest itself in frank and clear-cut remarks, such as that made by Lionardo Frescobaldi (in Cairo in 1384) who, while commenting on a group of people eating on the ground at a street corner in Cairo, noted: "when they have soiled the mouth, they lick it with the tongue as dogs, which they are."[97] Muṣṭafā ʿAlī was more emotional. Having no understanding for Cairenes' predilection for fried salty cheese, he was irritated that "they stretched out their hands for it in blind greed."[98] He also noticed that the Cairene women, in contrast with Turkish women, were bad housewives and "passed their days in idleness."[99] But Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, otherwise a well educated and cultured man, had his reasons to be sarcastic. He dreamt of a post in Cairo; he had even applied for a position of *defterdār*, the finance director of Egypt. Instead, however, he was sent to Jedda. Quite possibly, his criticism, which stressed the general disorder prevailing in the city, was meant to demonstrate how badly Egypt was governed and, probably, to suggest that he was the right person to improve it.

Sometimes, travelers' observations may sound strange though innocent or convincing enough to escape the critical sense of the reader. One may thus believe Arnold von Harff's (in Egypt in the end of the fifteenth century) who, while referring to molasses or "sugar honey" as he called it, observed that with it "in this country all kinds of food are cooked, since they have no butter, which melts on account of the great heat."[100] Surprising as it is, Johann Wild's remark (the early seventeenth century) on the eating habits of the Cairenes may nevertheless sound as convincing: "they fry their fish in linseed oil and some Arabs drink it like water."[101] Al-Muqaddasī's remark on the Egyptians' predilection for fish heads may

[97] Frescobaldi in Leonardo Frescobaldi, Giorgio Gucci and Simone Sigoli, *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1348, by Frescobaldi, Gucci & Sigoli*, trans. Theophilus Bellorini and Eugene Hoade, ed. Bellarimo Bagati (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1948), 49.

[98] Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description of Cairo of 1599*, trans. and ed. Andreas Tietze (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1975), 44.

[99] Ibid., 41, 44.

[100] Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff, Knight, from Cologne through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France, and Spain, Which he Accomplished in the Years 1496 to 1499*, trans. and ed. Malcolm Letts (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1946), 99.

[101] Johann Wild, *Voyages en Egypte de Johann Wild, 1606–1610*, trans. and ed. Oleg V. Volkoff (Le Caire: IFAO, 1973), 179.

arouse certain surprise, too. However, the author does not try to hide that the additional comment he provides in this respect ("if they saw a Syrian buying a fish they would follow him, and if he threw the fish's head out, they would collect it")[102] is hearsay and not a situation he witnessed personally.

Misleading the reader by inserting nonsense information in the travel account was not always entirely the fault of the traveler. Unable to verify data provided by the local guides, he simply believed in all possible absurdities and confabulations. The medieval and post-medieval European visitors to Cairo were particularly easy to misinform. Lack of personal contact with the local Muslims (and very limited contacts with local Christians) as well as mutual enmity and distrust, made the lifestyle of Egyptians and Cairenes veiled for the outsiders who were not able to systematically observe the ways of the autochthonous population.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that various numerical estimates as quoted in travel accounts are exaggerated, if not nonsensical. This refers, for example, to the alleged number of Cairene streets (from 12,000 to 24,000), to the alleged number of the city's inhabitants (from 300,000 to three million), to the alleged number of the Cairene water carriers (from 1,200 to 130,000), or to the number of the Cairene street cooks and kitchens (from 10,000 to 20,000). Such figures cannot be taken seriously. However, the European travelers who quote them may be justified—shocked by the hugeness of Cairo, and entirely dependent on their Cairene informants, usually interpreters by profession, they took the words of the latter at face value.

Much more than Europeans, Arabic-speaking travelers had a chance to verify the information they were given. However, the estimates regarding the height of the domestic buildings of al-Fusṭāṭ show that in this respect their accounts require caution, too, even when the authors are supposed to have been direct observers of things they described. And thus al-Muqaddasī (the end of the fourth/tenth century) speaks of 4–5 storey houses in which, as he was told, 200 persons could live.[103] Nāṣer-e Khosraw (the fifth/eleventh century; he was a Persian but knew Arabic) reports about buildings as tall as 7 to 14 storeys and capable to house 350 people.[104] Al-Idrīsī (the sixth/twelfth century) informs of buildings 5–7 storey

[102] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 205.
[103] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 198.
[104] *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 52.

high, in which 100 residents could be accommodated.[105] Of course, these discrepancies may mean that the height of Fusṭāṭi houses changed due to various historical developments. It may also mean, however, that different people see the same things differently.

Another feature of the travel literature that should be kept in mind is a universal tendency of travelers to diagnose and explain observed phenomena. As everybody is convinced he knows enough of food and health, these questions are commented on with particular confidence in one's knowledge. Foreign visitors to Cairo were not different. Salted cheese—a product which Cairenes, and Egyptians in general, consumed in significant quantities—caused a special interest. Muṣṭafā ʿAlī maintained it "caused a weakening of vision and led to blindness."[106] Leo Africanus knew that salted cheese and buffalo meat were, according to the doctors, reasons of some diseases.[107] Edward Brown (in Egypt in the seventeenth century) suggested an association between the greasy, salty, and fermented cheese, which the Egyptians consumed in significant quantities, and the frequent occurrence of leprosy among the local population.[108] The conclusions drawn by Mikołaj Radziwiłł were no less intriguing. Having noticed that the majority of the population suffered from eye diseases, he deducted this was because of fruits which the local people ate in significant quantities as well as because of water with which they washed the fruits down. The heavy turbans which people wore in the hot weather and which constantly pressed their heads, worsened the situation.[109] As for modern-era observations, the scholars of the Napoleonic team who worked in Egypt in the nineteenth century discovered that fruity liquors which the Copts made and drank in huge quantities made them suffer from hydroceles or pathological accumulations of serous fluid in bodily cavities.[110]

The authors of travel accounts may tend to exaggerate their observations and intentionally or unintentionally mislead the reader by interpreting or

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[105] See Roberto Rubinacci, "La ville du Caire dans la geographie d'al-Idrisi," in *CIHC 1969*, 406.

[106] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 44.

[107] Jean-Léon l'Africain, *Description de l'Afrique*. *Nouvelle Édition*, trans. A. Épaulard, ed. A. Épaulard, Th. Monod, H. Lhote and R. Mauny (Paris: Libraire d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1956), 493.

[108] Edward Brown, *Voyage en Egypte d'Edward Brown, 1673–1674*, trans. and ed. Marie-Thérèse Bréant (Le Caire: IFAO 1974), 182.

[109] Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, *Mikołaja Krzysztofa Radziwiłła peregrynacja do Ziemi Świętej* (*1582–1584*), in *Archiwum do Dziejów Literatury i Oświaty w Polsce* XV/2 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1925), 91.

[110] *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 411–12.

commenting on what they see. However, despite certain features which may be perceived as its weak points, there is no reason to reject travel literature altogether. Foreigners, even if naïve or biased, would notice things for which a local person never cared. Thus some of them would express their surprise with the extremely high number of Cairene street kitchens and food stands, others would observe that the Cairenes did not cook at home. Still others would lament on the scarcity of wine, which they missed so much, and explain the reasons for its absence. Some would additionally inform the reader how one could nevertheless get wine in Cairo. Some would make remarks on the table manners of the local people; others would comment on their food. Some would praise the possibility to buy deboned meat at the local butcher's—which was impossible in Europe of that time—while others would comment on sharp and salty strange local cheese, on fruit's prices, or on the ways of behavior of Berber rice threshers working in the Delta towns.

Unlike a foreigner, a local person would not be interested in recording his or her own routine, day-to-day practices, nor would he or she describe daily life of the nearby market place. This is especially valid for the Arab world of the Middle Ages, where keeping diaries or writing memoirs was not a part of the literary tradition.[111] The corpus of sources for studies on Arabic-Islamic medieval cities has another particular feature, or a deficiency rather. Due to the fact that the order according to which these cities were governed did not involve municipal authorities, the historical documentation referring to them lacks records and registers that are usually produced by bodies such as mayor's office, town hall, city council or guild boards. Therefore, history of medieval Near- and Middle-Eastern urban centers is in certain respects often much less transparent than that of their European counterparts. Foreigners' travel accounts partially fill this gap—provided that information they include is read with appropriate caution.

5. Dietary and Medical Treatises

Among the non-fiction literature of the medieval period there is a group of sources whose authors refer to food in a distinctly, professional and

[111] The two most noteworthy exceptions being Usāma Ibn Munqidh's *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, ed. Philip K. Hitti (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1930) and Ibn Ṭawq's *Yawmiyyāt*.

scholarly way. The work of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, an Iraqi physician, has been classified above as an example of travel literature; nevertheless, he could be also discussed in the category of authors who, having mastered the standards of Greek medicine, were aware of the importance of dietetics. As far as professional, medical-dietary approach to Egyptian food is concerned, two important works preceded ʿAbd al-Laṭīf's *Kitāb al-Ifāda*. One was the lengthy dietary treatise by the famous Jewish philosopher of the early Fatimid epoch, Isḥāq Ibn Sulaymān al-Isrāʾīlī (ca. 243–343/855–955).[112] His *Kitāb al-Aghdhiya wa-l-Adwiya*,[113] or "Book of Foods and Medicines," discusses in a comprehensive way almost all the foodstuffs consumed by humans, from all kinds of plants and their derivatives to dairy products, fish and various kinds of meat. Since al-Isrāʾīlī generally fails to mention which of the discussed items were available in Egypt, his work is often of little use for verifying the actual diet of the local population. Written in the spirit of Galenic dietetics, it constitutes a mine of information regarding the Greek influence upon the early Islamic medical thought and upon the possible diet of the Cairenes.

As far as defining the availability of certain foodstuffs in medieval Egypt is concerned, a medical treatise written by Ibn Riḍwān (388–453/998–1061), a doctor from Giza, is much more useful. Because Ibn Riḍwān's attitude to food was defined—due to the nature of his profession—by the context of human health, he did not care so much for what dishes people cooked but of what they prepared their food. Educated according to Galenic standards, he not only knew individual ingredients and their medicinal properties, but also subscribed to the thesis according to which a given population should consume only locally produced food—according, of course, to the actual "air circumstances." The dietary suggestions included in his *On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt* may probably be used as a food market directory of the Giza–al-Fusṭāṭ–al-Qāhira area.[114]

Of other works reflecting a scholarly approach to Egyptian foodstuffs, *La médicine des Égyptiens*[115] and *Plantes d'Egypte*[116] by Prosper Alpin, as

[112] The dates according to *EI²*, IV, "Isḥāḳ b. Sulaymān al-Isrāʾīlī" by A. Altmann. According to the editor of al-Isrāʾīlī's *Kitāb al-Aghdhiya wa-l-Adwiya*, the author died in 320/932.

[113] *Kitāb al-Aghdhiya wa-l-Adwiya* (*taʾlīf Isḥāq Ibn Sulaymān al-maʿrūf bi-l-Isrāʾīlī*), ed. M. aṣ-Ṣabbāḥ (Beirut: Muʿassasat ʿīzz al-Dīn li-l-Ṭibāʿah wa-n-Nashr, 1992).

[114] Arabic text and Engl. translation in Michael Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine: Ibn Riḍwān's Treatise "On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 77–149; 1–63.

[115] Trans. and ed. R. de Fenoyl (Le Caire: IFAO, 1980).

[116] Trans. and ed. R. de Fenoyl (Le Caire: IFAO, 1980).

well as *Voyage en Egypte*[117] by father Antonius Gonzales, should by no means be disregarded. Although both the authors visited Egypt in post-medieval period—Alpin in 1581–1584 and Gonzales in 1665–1666—the value of their observations and comments for the studies on the Egyptian historical flora and fauna cannot be overestimated.

6. Works of Fiction and *Adab*

Not surprisingly, works of fiction and *adab* constitute a very precious material for the studies of medieval Islamic daily routine. Of the volumes which prove to be particularly valuable sources of clues in the matters of the Cairene menu, *A Thousand and One Nights* should probably be mentioned in the first place. *A Thousand and One Nights*, "an omnium gatherum" (to use Robert Irwin's expression) includes two basic Cairene "culinary" stories:[118] "The Christian Broker's Tale" of the Hunchback cycle and "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers." The former, while depicting the ups and downs of a young Baghdadi merchant during his stay in Cairo, provides detailed lists of what the man consumed. The scenes when he dines in his apartment in the Khān Masrūr, interlaced with scenes when he composes food trays to be send to his lover, and the scenes when the two share meals in her place,[119] may constitute the most truthful record of what kind of food the well-to-do Cairenes were after. At the same time, they prove that also in Cairo the food could have had a highly erotic context and that the idea of getting "through the stomach to the heart" held true in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world as well.

Another Cairene story of the *Nights*, "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," may appear less directly connected with the city's culinary production, as most of the dishes mentioned in the narrative come from a Maghrebian necromancer's saddlebag. The foreign origins of the necromancer notwithstanding, the contents of his magical bag must have had more in common with the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square than with the kitchens of distant Fes.

[117] *Voyage en Egypte du Père Antonius Gonzales, 1665–1666*, trans. and ed. Charles Libois, 2 vols. (Le Caire: IFAO, 1977).

[118] Some of the culinary threads of the *Arabian Nights* were studied, for example, by Charles Perry, "A Thousand and One 'Fritters': The Food of *The Arabian Nights*," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 487–96 (where the question of proper translating of the dishes' names is discussed), and by van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 110–18 (discussing "alimentary metaphors" in the context of sex).

[119] Some of the food items mentioned in the tale are discussed by Perry, in "Thousand and One 'Fritters'," 496.

Roasted chicken, roast meat, rice with honey, pilaf,[120] sausages, stuffed lamb breast, nutty *kunāfa* swimming in bee's honey, *zulābiyya* "donuts," *qaṭāʾif* pancakes folded around a sweet nut filling, and baklava were all well-known and popularly consumed items belonging to the Cairene cook shops' offer.[121] Jūdar, the Cairene impoverished youth living on bread and cheese, could get them only through the magic Maghrebian saddlebag.

Nuzhat an-Nufūs wa Mudḥik al-ʿAbūs ("The Diversion of the Souls, Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face"),[122] comes from an entirely different basket as it is a somehow disorderly collection of anecdotes and stories in verse and prose written by ʿAlī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (810–868/1407–1464). Ibn Sūdūn, a Cairene, a "second-generation mamluk and a trained theologian who won for himself the doubtful reputation of a buffoon"[123] was a hashish addict of modest means who had to economize on food.[124] The gastronomic aspects of *Nuzha* were already discussed by Geert van Gelder and Manuela Marín.[125] As far as the present study is concerned, a particularly valuable feature of the work is that related to Ibn Sūdūn's addiction to hashish. The consumption of this herb, releasing a craving for sweets, made the author throw a rather peculiar light on this part of the food city's culture.

Maṭāliʿ al-Budūr fī Manāzil as-Surūr ("Moonrises in the Pleasure Grounds," or, more literally, "Where Full Moons Rise, Where Pleasures Descend"), is an *adab*-style anthology which includes—among the chapters dealing with the house, personal hygiene and culture, as well as various pleasures of life—chapters on food and drink. Typical for the genre, its author, ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Ghuzūlī (d. 815/1412) a Syrian of Turkish mamluk origin who visited Egypt a number of times, illustrates the discussed subjects with anecdotes and poetry. Unlike other authors of similar works,

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[120] In fact "*ruzz mufalfal*," often misleadingly translated as "peppered rice".

[121] For more details on the preparations see relevant sections of chapter II. "The Cairene Menu: Ingredients, Products and Preparations".

[122] The work was edited by Arnoud Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face: A Study and Critical Edition of the Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-ʿAbūs by ʿAlī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bašbuġāwī (Cairo 810/1407—Damascus 868/1464)* (Leiden: Research School CNWS, School of Asian, African, and Amerindian Studies, 1998). The above-quoted rendering of the Arabic title is by A. Vrolijk; van Gelder translated it as "The Recreation of Souls that Raises Laughter in Him Who Scowls;" van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 90.

[123] Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, ix.

[124] Biographical data in Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 1–20; Marín, "Literatura y gastrononia," 138–9.

[125] Van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 90–6; Marín, "Literatura y gastrononia," 138–51.

he also "tries to balance literary pleasure and useful information,"[126] and from *Maṭāliʿ* one can learn precious details regarding certain beverages and food preparations, their ingredients and medical properties.[127]

7. What the "Delectable War" is Really About: Re-reading the Curious Tale of the Mamluk Era

The legacy of the medieval Cairene fiction includes also a work which deserves more attention than any of the books mentioned above, and this is not only because any discussion on the culinaria and foodways of Cairo would be incomplete without referring to it. At some point in the ninth/fifteenth century, or in the decadent period of the Circassian Mamluk era, a certain Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā Ibn Ḥasan al-Ḥajjār, apparently a resident of Cairo, composed a curious narrative titled *Kitāb al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq bayna Laḥm aḍ-Ḍaʾn wa Ḥawāḍir as-Sūq*. In 1932–34 the work was partly translated, under the title *The Delectable War between Mutton and the Refreshments of the Market-Place*, by Joshua Finkel who also provided the translation with the summary of the text and extensive comments.[128] Since that date the tale was summarized a number of times in contemporary studies[129] and there is no need to retell its story once again. In the context of the present study it probably suffices to say that the *Delectable War* features a conflict between two camps, each of which is represented by a significant number of personified edible goods. In other words, various meats, animal fats,[130] and meat dishes, led by the mutton—called here King Mutton—fight the camp of meat-free foods that is led

[126] Van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 47.

[127] ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ al-Budūr fī Manāzil as-Surūr* (Port Said: Maktabat ath-Thaqāfa ad-Dīniyya, 2000). Food is dealt with in part II, 335–373; drinks and sweets, 393–403. Fore biographical data on al-Ghuzūlī see "Editor's introduction," in ibid., 5; *EI²*, II, "Al-Ghuzūlī" by C. Brockelmann; also van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 47.

[128] Joshua Finkel, "King Mutton, A Curious Tale of the Mamlūk Period," *Zeitschrift für Semitistik und Verwandte Gebiete* 8 (1932): 122–48 (I); 9 (1933–1934): 1–18 (II). Finkel based his translation on one of the two existing manuscripts—the Damascene one—without consulting the other, the EL Escorial one. El Escorial MS was edited by Manuela Marín in "Sobre alimentación," 83–122.

[129] Finkel, "King Mutton," I, 123–125; Rodinson, "Studies," 113–14; van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 96–99 (van Gelder translates the title as "The Lovely War…"); Marín, "Literatura y gastrononia," 150–51.

[130] Particularly *alya*, or the sheep's tail fat; as for "*samn*," or rendered fat/clarified butter, its "assignment" is not clear: in the beginning of the story it joins the "meat camp," at other times it appears by the side of fresh butter in the camp of non-meat foods.

by King Honey. The cause is not always clear but, according to the most obvious understanding, the prominence over all the foodstuffs is at stake, both those in the bazaar and those on the table.

For historical food studies, one of the most evident merits of this work is that its author used the war game stylistics as a pretext to mention all the food names which he knew. And he knew many of them. In effect, the text is so intensively saturated with edibles of every possible kind that it at times resembles an index to a cookery book interwoven with a complete list of food products available in the Near Eastern markets. But the countless names of foodstuffs are not all that the text of the *Delectable War* can be valued for. All the scholars who hitherto discussed the bizarre work noticed the unquestionable importance of the social context hidden in its message. However, since their analysis of this context has introduced a degree of confusion into the problem, some of the points require clarification.

The most vital of the interpretation problems refers to the fact that the war the two "kings" wage tends to be understood as a conflict between the food of the rich and the food of the poor. Such a reading of the text introduces major confusion into both the question of high and low cooking and the food-related aspects of social order in medieval Cairo. One is left not only with an impression that Cairene society was made exclusively of rich and poor men but, also, that rich men, forming some kind of the leisure class, were all gluttons who did not know limits in stuffing themselves with the most refined dishes, while the poor followed a strange vegetarian dietary combination, the ingredients of which ranged from honey and imported cheeses to salted fish and pickled turnip. In other words, reading the *Delectable War* in terms of a class war between low and high cooking introduced a major misunderstanding into the social and culinary profile of Cairo: it not only suggested that the food of the poor and the food of the rich were the only culinary alternatives available in the city, but also imposed identifying the difference between the two by the contrast between the meat and non-meat foods. "The meats are the foods of the rich while the other dishes fall to the poor, especially the peasants," as Maxime Rodinson neatly summed up Finkel's point of view.[131]

The reasons why such a confusing image of the Cairene society prevailed seem to have been twofold. On the one hand, it was a result of using the Western "rich man's food–poor man's food" pattern in refer-

[131] Rodinson, "Studies," 114.

ence to the culinary culture of Cairo. As already pointed out, this opposition, routinely recognized in European history, does not work if applied to define the Arabic-Islamic medieval urban societies—if only because their basic social divisions (at least in the case of Cairo) did not quite correspond to the schemes relating to diet or alimentary choices.[132]

Actually, applying a "rich man-poor man" pattern to the message carried in the *Delectable War* and reading the tale in categories of a class war was encouraged by a number of phrases used in its text. One of them was the title itself, suggesting that mutton, as opposed to the popular non-meat refreshments of the market place, was unavailable from the bazaar cook shops and that therefore it must have constituted a foodstuff of particularly high status. The remark about mutton being "savored by every caliph and sultan"[133] and eaten exclusively by people of means seemed to confirm the impression evoked by the title. A similar effect was produced by the fact that the consumers of non-meat market refreshments were referred to as "paupers" (*mafālīs, dhū al-iflās*), or as the "*vulgus profanum*," or "rabble" (*arādhil an-nās*).[134] When one adds to these an indication that the market refreshments could be bought for just a penny or two,[135] the above-discussed interpretation becomes understandable. The fact that in Finkel's translation the term "starving" was interpreted as "(meat)-starved," must also have had its significance.[136]

Geert van Gelder, who basically agrees with the idea of interpreting the conflict as food of the rich versus food of the poor battle, nevertheless advises certain flexibility in this respect.[137] Indeed, a flexible attitude may be required to reexamine the meaning of the tale, if only because reexamination involves a significant change of approach here. In fact, to reveal the correct message behind the text in question, it probably suffices to define who was who or, rather, what was what of the *Delectable War*'s two titular characters, and what was their true meaning for the food culture of the city.

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[132] For a more detailed discussion on the question see below, chapter I.5. "Customers," pp. 128–31.

[133] See p. 87 of the Arabic text, in Marín, "Sobre alimentación;" p. 1 of the Engl. text in Finkel, "King Mutton."

[134] See pp. 88, 96, of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

[135] See p. 88 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación;" p. 2 of the Engl. text in Finkel, "King Mutton."

[136] See p. 3 of the Engl. text in Finkel, "King Mutton;" *ahl al-majāʿa* in the Arabic text, in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," 89.

[137] Van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 98.

The meat-free *ḥawāḍir as-sūq*, translated by Finkel as the "refreshments of the market place," were mocked in the narrative as cheap goods purchased and consumed by nobody but paupers and rabble. Actually, *ḥawāḍir as-sūq* were not as bad or monotonous as it may appear from these remarks. Apart from King Honey itself, apparently the most appreciated item of the group, the refreshments of the market place included a variety of milks, both imported from Syria and locally produced, as well as Lebanese yoghurt preparations, such as Baʿalbakī curds, or those in which yoghurt was mixed with fennel seeds, pistachios, and *zaʿtar*. There were also the preparations in which yoghurt was mixed with salty bitter oranges, green almonds, sour apples, or cucumbers. And there was also Swiss chard, pumpkin, or eggplant prepared in milk, as well as a variety of cheeses, including cheese imported from Sicily as well as various fried, roasted, and cooked cheese preparations. Apart from milk and its derivative products, *ḥawāḍir as-sūq* included also an array of vinegar preparations, such as raisins with sugar and vinegar, pickled turnips and cucumbers, pickled eggplants with mint, capers, a variety of olives, and salted lemons. Of salted preserves, one could find Alexandrian fish paste, salted sparrows, salted fish, and river mussels in oil and lemon water. In addition to these, there were also various fish dishes as well as numerous river and sea fishes—imported and local, preserved and fresh. There were fried eggs, omelettes, hot grilled colocasia, lentils, hummus, and broad beans, the last three still popular in Cairo today. And there were *bawārid*, or cold snacks, such as seasoned cauliflower, pumpkin in mustard seeds, beans in olive oil and caraway, fried spinach, and fried eggplant. And, last but not least, there were fruits, flowers, and seasonings as well as a variety of sweets and sweetening agents such as local and imported honey and fruit molasses. And fats included clarified butter, sesame oil, *ṭaḥīna*, that is a paste ground of sesame seeds, and fresh butter—but excluding the Fat of the Mutton Tail and Rendered Fat, the latter being won over by the former to the "meat camp." All in all, a vegetarian's paradise.

These are, of course, not all of the products, semi-products, and dishes called "refreshments of the market place" but sufficient to profile the group. Its adversary in the conflict, the "meat camp" with King Mutton at its head, held in contempt this interesting collection contending that what it consisted of was the food of the paupers and of the rabble. One should remember, however, that these were but the mocking words of an adversary, meant to insult the enemy and not to reflect reality. Hence, the truth they propose is only partly true. Indeed, it cannot be denied

that specialties such as the cooked broad beans, hummus, lentils, fried colocasia, salted fish paste, fried eggs, fried cheese, and primitive sweet preparations such as *nayda* were the food of the poor. As such, they were, above all, to provide the nutritional value and not to satisfy the gustatory fancies of their poor consumers. But it is also true, that despite the fact that they were the cheapest and the simplest of what was available, many of these items had their admirers among the elites. It is enough to mention sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his wife, Ṭughāy Khātūn, both of whom apparently could not do without fried cheese, otherwise one of the most popular Cairene refreshments of the market-place.[138]

Another important aspect of the items listed in the *Delectable War* as market refreshments was that many of them were too refined to be classified as food of the poor. Moreover, they were never meant for the poor. Palmyra olives, Sicilian cheese, and honey imported from the Maghreb, Barqa, Rūm, the country of the Franks suffice as examples. These goods were obviously not brought to Cairo just to please the local poor or cultivate the nuances of their tastes. The same refers to the array of the finest imported fruits and flowers from which very expensive beverages were made. What is more, many such market refreshments—such as simple sour milk preparations, salted fish paste, pickles, and cold snacks—had their counterparts in the cookery books whose recipes were not meant for the *vulgus profanum*. Contrary to what has from time to time been suggested, the meat-free market refreshments as presented in the *Delectable War* cannot thus be identified with the food of the poor, if only because the latter could not afford many of the foodstuffs included in this category and because the rich ate also things other than the meat preparations.

True, meat was highly valued, and the rich, just as any other social group of the Cairene society, would appreciate meaty dishes. The difference between the rich and those of more modest means was that the former would not enjoy just any meat, while the latter could not enjoy every kind of meat. Meat had its hierarchy in which the kind mattered.[139] As illustrated by the narrator of the *Delectable War*: "There was a monarch of powerful sway, called 'King Mutton'... In his service were enrolled only

[138] On this and other non-meat snacks consumed by an-Nāṣir Muḥammad or by his wife see al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210 (cf. Dreher, "Regard," 64); idem, *Sulūk*, II/1, 196; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 58; see also below, chapter II.5. "Dairy products," p. 238.

[139] For a more detailed discussion on meat and its kinds as consumed by medieval Cairenes see below, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 173–98.

people of dinars and dirhams. He had a vizier, called the 'Meat of Goats,' poor men came to him only if they grew richer and stronger. He also had an emir, called 'Beef,' whom every rich man appreciated in case he grew poor."[140] Whoever enjoyed appropriate means would then go for mutton, the most expensive meat in the market, and would rather not eat beef.[141]

As for goat meat, apparently unappreciated and relatively cheap, it seems to be one of the most crucial elements for reinterpreting the whole story. In the narrative, goat meat plays an important part in the "meat camp" generally identified with the "rich food camp." As a matter of fact, had the identification of the "meat camp" with the "rich food camp" been correct, it would inevitably mean that the goat meat was a rich man's delicacy. From what is said in the *Delectable War*, and from what the other sources say, however, it comes out that this was not the case. Of the entire collection of Arabic-Islamic recipes, very few suggest to use goat meat as an ingredient.[142] Moreover, even the market inspector's manuals which contain instructions referring to the bazaar cooks, do not mention goat meat as an actual or suggested ingredient for any dish. All these manuals say about this kind of meat is that the butchers should mark it with saffron and avoid mixing it with other meats. Goat meat, like camel meat, or like sheep's heads or trotters cooked in the market, was the food of those with rather meager income, those who could not afford beef, let alone mutton. Meaty as it was, goat meat by no means belonged to the menu of the rich. In other words, one would never find it in the King Mutton's camp had this camp been indeed identical with the "rich food camp."

Summing up, reading the *Delectable War* in terms of allegories which reduce the meaning of the tale to a conflict between the food of the rich and the food of the poor, or high and low cooking, seems to be pointless in the context of the medieval Cairene environment. First, the rather limited circles of the rich on the one hand, and the army of the poor on the other, were not the only strata of the Cairo population.[143] Second, since

[140] Based on Finkel's translation, which reads: "He had a vizier, called the 'Meat of Goats,' *to whom no poor man came but he fortified him and supplied his want*;" "King Mutton," II, 1; Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," 87–8.

[141] According to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, the difference between the mutton and all other kinds of meat consisted in that the mutton was healthy, while other meats were detrimental, particularly for the sick; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 173; also Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 44.

[142] *Kanz*, 79, n. 199, and a few recipes in which meat of the suckling kid is called for; see below, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 181, 185, 195.

[143] For more details regarding the Cairene social order see above, "Introductory Essay: Medieval Cairo and its Inhabitants," pp. 19–22; also below, chapter I.5. "Customers," pp. 128–31.

the rich were not the only ones to consume meat, the "meat camp" cannot be identified with the "rich food camp." Similarly, since many of the "subjects" of the King Honey's vegetarian kingdom were delicacies expensive enough to be beyond the reach of paupers, the non-meat *ḥawāḍir as-sūq* cannot be labeled as the "food of the poor." Moreover, the fact that the market refreshments were available in the market place did not imply that they could not be appreciated by the elites. This rule also worked the other way round: many of the numerous items listed in the tale as belonging to the King Mutton meaty domain were easily available from cook shops, the royal mutton included.[144]

Medieval Cairo was by no means comparable to a manor whose lord ate juicy roasts and *foie gras* pâtés while his poor peasant serfs had to be happy with crusty dark bread and onions. Similarly, the Cairene *Delectable War* was not the Bruegelian battle between the Carnival and the Lent,[145] nor was it a European medieval calendar whose illuminations contrasted details of daily life at opposite ends of the social scale.[146] Having found that the *Delectable War* could not have been patterned after rich man's food—poor man's food scheme, one has no choice but to simply take it for what it really is: a dispute over the superiority of one category of food over another.[147] In fact, the titular war between the meat and the non-meat foods, or between the meat that was *the* food, and the non-meat foods that were but snacks (or "refreshments," if one prefers to use Finkel's interpretation of the term *ḥawāḍir*), must have reflected some ongoing controversy about whether the meat-free snacks could be considered a

[144] See, for instance, chapters on roast meat sellers (*shawwāʾūn*) in *ḥisba* manuals by ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 30 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 54), and Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 37.

[145] Cf. the argument put forward by Rodinson, "Studies," 115; also van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 98.

[146] See Bober, *Art*, 226–9.

[147] It should be kept in mind that al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War*, or *Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*, is not the only Arabic-language example of a narrative featuring the war between food items. In Baghdad of the early Abbasid epoch Ibn ash-Shāh aṭ-Ṭāhirī produced "The War of Cheese and Olives" and "The War of Meat and Fish" (referred to in *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth-Century Survey of Muslim Culture*, ed. and trans. Bayard Dodge /New York: Columbia University Press, 1970/, I, 335). However, both works are apparently lost and neither is available for comparison. What we have at our disposal, though, is *The Boasting Debate between Rice and Pomegranate Seeds*, a *maqāma* dating back to the Mamluk times. The interpretation of the story by Ibrahim Kh. Geries, who edited, translated, and annotated it, is doubtlessly worth considering: see Ibrahim Kh. Geries, *A Literary And Gastronomical Conceit: Mufākharat al-Ruzz wa'l-Ḥabb Rummān. The Boasting Debate Between Rice And Pomegranate Seeds. Or al-Maqāma al-Simāṭiyya* (*The Tablecloth Maqāma*) (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2002).

real food or not.[148] In this context, the *Delectable War* may be comparable to European "Tale of the Four Offices" by the French fourteenth-century poet Eustache Deschamps. With the title offices being the kitchen, cellar, bakery, and saucer, the "Tale" constitutes a mock-rhetorical encounter in which each of the offices is endowed with the gift of speech so as to attack the others and proclaim its own superior worth.[149]

Indeed, in the Arabic-Islamic culture, vegetarian dishes were not really dishes—they were, to use Charles Perry's words, "considered suitable for invalids."[150] Such dishes were strongly recommended for the sick, which even the *Delectable War* follows: "Never as yet has a physician prescribed meat for the sick."[151] The fact that the title war was finally won by the "meat camp" stresses meat's unquestionable rights to supremacy and superiority over all the foodstuffs. It finally and definitely confirms that the meatless edibles did not deserve to be called meals, and that they were nothing but hors d'œuvres, snacks, or refreshments. What the *Delectable War* says is that it was only meat that truly counted on the table and that Cairo was as carnivorous as the rest of the Arabic-Islamic world of the Middle Ages.

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[148] In al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*) the "meat camp" army is called "army of foods" ("*juyūsh al-aṭʿima*," in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," 117), which suggests that the adversary "non-meat camp" was formed of something not necessarily acknowledged as food.

[149] See Jack Turner, *Spice: The History of a Temptation* (New York: Akfred A. Knopf, 2004), 107–8.

[150] Perry, "Familiar Foods," 283; see also David Waines and Manuela Marín, "*Muzawwar*: Counterfeit Fare for Fasts and Fevers," in Waines, *Patterns*, 303–16; also below, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 253–64 where the approach of the Arabs to vegetables in the context of the Greek medicine is discussed.

[151] Finkel, "King Mutton," 10; Marín, "Sobre alimentación," 97.

PART ONE

ON FOOD

CHAPTER ONE

THE CAIRENE MENU: GENESIS

1. Sources of Culinary Inspiration

A. *Local Tradition*

As a rule, the foodstyle of a culture is, first of all, determined by the natural resources available for it.[1] Defining the local crops and market supplies is therefore of vital importance, for the supply may not only determine the "alimentary totality"[2] but also help us to understand the demand. This, in turn, may provide valuable clues regarding nutritional habits of a given population. The staples of medieval Cairo can be best defined by using the chroniclers' records referring to periodic changes of food prices caused, above all, by the occurrences of epidemics or the low level of Nile floodwaters. Following such changes leads to the discovery that in all of the local agriculture mutton, beef, chicken, geese, eggs, wheat, rice, broad beans, sugar, cheese, oil (especially sesame oil), and melons were the most sought-after goods. Apart from melons, also pears, pomegranates, and quinces, believed to possess therapeutic properties, were in demand, particularly during periods of plagues.[3]

Such a "discovery," however, is not of much help in explaining the spirit behind the Cairene menu. True, it confirms the thesis that people usually cook from what they have at hand and preferably from what they know. The problem is that in the case of Cairo of the Middle Ages it apparently worked the other way round, too. In other words, the city menu could be

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[1] K.C. Chang, "Introduction," in *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. K.C. Chang (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 6.

[2] That is a whole range of aliments available to a society during a particular time period; see Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 67.

[3] Changes of prices are frequently mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in his *Sulūk*, I–IV; or by Ibn Iyās in *Badāʾiʿ*, I–V, particularly vol. II. The problem of periodical food shortages and price increases related to them was discussed by al-Maqrīzī, in his *Ighātha*; for English translation of this work and comments see Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 29–54. For more remarks on this kind of data see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 3. "Chronicles and annalistic sources," p. 44, and chapter II.1.C. "Rice," pp. 152–3.

generally composed according to what the Egyptian countryside produced but, at the same time, agriculture and the market had to accommodate the requirements of the new city's conglomerate menu and the recipes behind it. After all, some necessities such as chicken, water buffalo, rice, and sugar appeared in Egypt only after the Islamic conquest.

This is not to suggest that the traditional harvests of the local soil, or the millennia-long Egyptian experiments and experience with them, did not contribute to the making of the Cairene cuisine. Food habits are not easily alterable, nor are they susceptible to swift extinction.[4] The food-style prevailing in the future al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo area before the Islamic conquest would not, therefore, simply pass into oblivion after the first Arab settlements had been founded in the location. On the contrary, it seems that indigenous Egyptian dishes, made from local produce and according to local traditional ways, overwhelmed the menu of Arab warrior newcomers.

Usually, when migrants settle in the new land, their food attracts the attention of their hosts. The first Arab-Muslim settlers of al-Fusṭāṭ tried to make the Egyptians appreciate their culinary culture, too. Their menu, based on meat, dates, barley, and milk, was crude and not too complex.[5]

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[4] Cf. Tuğrul Şavkay's "On Drinking and Eating in the Daily Life during the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire," in *Imperial Taste: 700 Years of Culinary Culture* (Ankara: Ministry of Culture Publications, 2000), 22, where the author maintains that "the eating and drinking habits are the aspects the most difficult to become altered and that a long time is needed to assimilate the innovations."

[5] Due to the absence of appropriate source material, defining what seventh-century Arabs ate is almost unfeasible, particularly that the Arabs who participated in the conquests—the conquest of Egypt including—were coming from many different parts of the Arabian Peninsula (see above, Introduction, pp. 7–8). The Sunna, or the collection of the sayings of the Prophet, names traditional Arab preparations such as *tharīd* (meat cooked in broth on which crumbled or torn-up bread was thrown to moisten), *ḥays* (sweet meatballs made of dried pounded bread and pitted dried dates and warm fat), *sawīq* (a meal of parched grain, made into a kind of gruel, to which was added water, butter or fat from the tails of sheep), *ʿaṣīda* (possibly wheat-flour moistened and stirred about with clarified butter and cooked), *aqiṭ* (a dried curd product made of buttermilk which was cooked until evaporated, and then dried hard), or *talbīna* (today flour of roasted green barley grains mixed/steeped with *laban*/fermented milk/or cooked with milk). Barley bread, gourd, clarified butter (*samn*), dates, and lizards (which the Prophet refused to consume) supplement the Arab diet as presented in this source. Whatever the spiritual value of the Sunna, it should be remembered that the six official collections of *ḥadīths* were compiled during the third/ninth century on the basis of oral transmission and, despite the process of authentication to which they were subjected, cannot be considered a trustworthy source of information on the first/seventh-century details. In the case of food, like in the case of usages, habits, etc., we cannot rule out that some of the preparations or practices mentioned in the *ḥadīth*s were in fact preparations or practices which originated in the conquered neighboring provinces, and not directly in the environment of Arabia. According

But that was the food the Arabs knew and that was what they could offer. Having conquered Egypt and founded the camp of al-Fusṭāṭ in 21/642, ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿĀṣ and his Arab warriors invited the local Copts for a meal. The event was to manifest the civilized standards of the Arabs and thus to prove the ability of the latter to rule Egypt. Several camels were slaughtered and cooked in water and salt. After the army commanders and their troops assembled, " ʿAmr sat down and beckoned to the people of Egypt to join him. Then the meat and the broth were served . . . Muslims, dressed in their woolen cloaks and unarmed, began to eat in a typically Arab fashion, tearing at the meat with their teeth and slurping the broth. After a while, the Egyptians dispersed," apparently unable to hide their scorn. Having seriously considered the whole situation, the next day ʿAmr issued appropriate orders to his army commanders. Then the Egyptians were invited for a meal again. This time even the most critical of them must have been satisfied: not only "the Arab servants served them dishes of Egypt [*alwān* Miṣr]," but also the Arabs were dressed in Egyptian clothes and footwear, "ate the food of the Egyptians, and behaved in an Egyptian manner."[6]

As adaptation usually requires time, one dinner could not really turn the Arabs into Egyptians. But it could make them appreciate the otherness and novelty, however fond they remained of tastes and smells of their simple home cuisine. Some centuries later, Arab preparations such as *tharīd, ʿaṣīda*, or *ḥays*, improved by various Baghdadi gourmets and described in cookery books, would arrive at al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo by a somewhat roundabout route. For the time being, however, the traditional local menu seemed to have prevailed first in the al-Fusṭāṭ camp, and then, probably, in the town into which the camp developed. However, this local pre-Islamic cooking tradition, meaningful as it was for the later emergence of the Cairene cuisine, remains largely unknown to us, and so does the true nature of its influence upon the menu of Cairo. This refers both to the menu of Coptic Egypt of the Byzantine period (which directly preceded the Islamic conquest) and to the food traditions of antiquity. Naturally enough, the

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to some contemporary scholars, the first/seventh-century Arabs knew also dishes such as *maṣliyya* (meat cooked in whey), *maḍīra* (meat cooked in curdled milk), *ṣināb* (dipping sauce made with mustard and raisins), and *sikbāja* (beef stew soured with vinegar). ʿAbd Allah Ibn Judʿān, a Qurayshite notable famous for the unusual luxury with which he surrounded himself, is often mentioned as having introduced *fālūdhaj*, a Persian dish made of wheat and honey, to pre-Islamic Mecca; see van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 25–6; Nasrallah, *Annals*, 54; Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine*, 28; *EI*[2], II, "Ghidhā'" by M. Rodinson.

[6] Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh ar-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1407 A.H.), II, 515.

Coptic culinary culture must have inherited and preserved, at least partly, the cuisine of both the Pharaonic Egypt and the Graeco-Roman period that followed. Apart from a few food preparations[7] which managed to find their way from the Coptic village onto the Islamic city tables, this culture, however, also remains undefined.[8]

As far as the ancient heritage is concerned, the major part of our knowledge about Hellenistic and Roman foodstyle as practiced in Egypt comes from the works of Athenaeus, a Greek who lived in Naucratis, Egypt (ca. 200 C.E.) and Apicius, a Roman who is said to have lived in Alexandria for some time in the early first century C.E.[9] However, both Athenaeus's *Deipnosophistae* (or "The Banquet of the Learned")[10] and Apicius's *De re coquinaria*,[11] though written in Egypt—or, in the case of Apicius, at least partly inspired by Egypt—are not products of the country's indigenous tradition. As such, they cannot offer too many clues regarding the culinary culture of those who lived outside the local Graeco-Roman world. The autochthonous Egyptians, conservative as they were in their attitudes towards their own ways, paid little attention to Greek, Roman, or Hellenized Egyptian elites and their lifestyles, their menu included.[12] The same attitude must have been manifested towards the Byzantine residents of Egypt during the centuries that followed the Roman period. Indeed, the Graeco-Roman foodways, as practiced in the historic Ptolemaic and Roman centers of Egypt and ignored by the indigenous population, had

[7] Such as, for example, *nayda* (a preparation made of germinated cooked wheat), *kishk* (crushed wheat mixed with yoghurt and then dried in the sun), *mulūkhiyya* (Jew's mallow) dish, salty cheese, salty fish, bread, etc.

[8] Both *Pratiques rituelles et alimentaires coptes*, by Cérès Wissa-Wassef, and "Food Habits of the Egyptians: Newly Emerging Trends," *La Revue de Santé de la Méditerranée Orientale* 10/6 (2004): 898–915 by H. Hassan-Wassef, deal extensively with contemporary Copt food, claiming its ancient origins; the claim, however, is not supported by evidence. The same is valid for S.H. Leeder's *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs. A Study of Manners and Customs of the Copts of Egypt*, London, 1918 where, however, food is dealt with only cursorily.

[9] Alexandria, no doubt, left its mark on some of Apicius's recipes. The information that Marcus Gavius Apicius, the famed epicure who flourished during the reign of Tiberius, lived in this city, is given in Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 795.

[10] Athenaeus of Naucratis, *The Deipnosophists: With an English Translation by Charles Burton Gulick*, 7 vols. (London: W. Heinemann Ltd., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) 1961–71.

[11] Christopher Grocock and Sally Grainger, *Apicius, a Critical Edition with an Introduction and English Translation* (Blackawton: Prospect Books, 2006).

[12] So much so that the Greek medicine, also a significant diet-shaping factor, was popularized in Egypt only after it had been brought there, roughly in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries, as part of the Arabic-Islamic cultural package. On the Egyptians' attitude towards Greeks and Romans see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 587.

little chance to affect the culinary culture that developed in medieval Cairo. One should admit, however, that sometimes the similarities are striking—as in the case of parallels between the fruit preservation techniques as described in Apicius's recipes and those presented in the Arabic cookery books compiled by the medieval authors in Cairo.[13]

Surprisingly enough, we have almost no idea of the cuisine of Pharaonic Egypt, either. Although the literary, artistic, and archeological evidence of ancient Egyptian history is immense, it does not provide us with reliable information regarding the local foodstyle of the most remote past. Ancient Egyptians did not leave us cookbooks or recipes, nor did they write much, if at all, about eating. The same refers to the pictorial evidence dating back to the period. Moreover, due to the fact that studies of ancient Egyptian food have to be based on tomb findings, even the most detailed contemporary research on the foodstuffs of Pharaonic Egypt gives us rather vague clues regarding the true daily diet of the country's ancient inhabitants.[14] Therefore, it is not altogether obvious whether the modern Egyptians, while being "heirs to the particular climate, fauna and flora of their country," indeed display "a unique continuity in gastronomic matters from Pre-Dynastic times to their own."[15] Especially that sharing the habitat along the Nile valley over a very long period of time does not mean sharing all of the natural features of the place. After all, climate, fauna, or flora are invulnerable to change, which means that the circumstances which were particular for Pre-Dynastic Egypt or Pharaonic Egypt could not be identical with those prevailing in much later epochs, be it the Middle Ages or the modern times.

[13] Such as, for instance, instructions for keeping grapes, quinces, or mulberries, fresh (Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, XVII–XXII); see also below, chapter II.7. "Fruits," pp. 272–5. If, however, we consider the fact that Islam was a heir to the civilizations of antiquity, such similarities are less striking.

[14] See, above all, the impressive *Food: The Gift of Osiris* by Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, and chapters on food in *Ancient Egyptian Materials*, edited by Nicholson and Shaw. Since the food articles which were left in the ancient Egyptian graves were meant for the dead, identifying these articles with the daily food of the Egyptians is, in a way, a misinterpretation. At the same time, however, the dead usually "shared" their meals with the temple priests, and in this sense the food fed to the dead was also the food of the living. Be that as it may, the nature of the Egyptian grave finds allows one to surmise the crops/food articles available in Egypt of that time. Due to Athenaeus's remarks and Apicius's Alexandrian recipes, we also know at least some of the ingredients available in the urban markets of the Graeco-Roman Egypt. See also Dorothy J. Crawford, "Food: Tradition and Change in Hellenistic Egypt," *World Archeology* 11/2 (1979): 136–46.

[15] See Bober, *Art*, 28–9.

B. *Extra-Egyptian Influences*

The influence of pre-Islamic Egyptian culinary culture upon the making of the Cairene menu, poorly documented as it is, is by no means insignificant. Still, it can best be defined as being of secondary importance, as both the emergence and the forming of the Cairene menu were, above all, inspired from outside. This extra-Egyptian inspiration, decisive for making the city a main culinary center of the time, was related to three major, Islam-triggered phenomena that affected most of the Mediterranean Near-Eastern arena of the Middle Ages. All three can today be styled as "revolutionary." These are: the Arab agricultural revolution that was first described by Andrew Watson, the commercial revolution that followed it, and the culinary revolution that evolved parallel to both of them. Cairo proved to be the most receptive ground for the values they carried.

As for the "Arab agricultural revolution," the term designates the process of diffusion of food plants (originating mostly in India) across the Islamic domains.[16] Made possible by the emergence of the Arabic-Islamic empire, the process was a direct result of considerable translocation and resettlement of peoples who, moving from country to country, transferred with them knowledge of the farming techniques and plant species of their homelands.[17] The new agricultural ideas, transmitted across the length and breadth of the Islamic world by the Arabs or by those whom they conquered, were to alter the economy of many regions.[18] The effort required for the transfer of plants must have been particularly rewarding in the case of Egypt for, to use the words of a foreign visitor to this country, the property of its soil was "that whatever is sown will grow."[19] In fact,

[16] Andrew Watson, "The Arab Agricultural Revolution and its Diffusion, 700–1100," in Waines, *Patterns*, 247–74; also idem, *Agricultural Innovation in the Early Islamic World: The Diffusion of Crops and Farming Techniques, 700–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); idem, "The Imperfect Transmission of Arab Agriculture into Christian Europe," in *Kommunikation zwischen Orient und Okzident. Alltag und Sachkultur* (Wien: VDOAW, 1994), 199–212.

[17] Watson, "Agricultural Revolution," 247, 258, 260. According to Watson, the agricultural revolution was over by the fifth/eleventh century.

[18] Such as Transoxania, Persia, Mesopotamia, the Levant, the Maghreb, Spain, Sicily, the savannah lands, and parts of West and East Africa and Egypt.

[19] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 2. Similar opinions must have been relatively common also among the Westerners traveling in Egypt, to whom Frederick Norden (in Egypt in the mid-eighteenth century), addressed a clear comment: "The authors, who have undertaken to give descriptions of Egypt ... content with having said, that the fertility of the country is derived solely from this annual inundation of the Nile, they have gone no further; and their silence has given an occasion to think, that Egypt is a paradise on earth, where they have

the Egyptian soil did not suit all the plants.[20] Whatever drawbacks the Nile valley had, its fertility was indisputable—compared to other countries of the region, Egypt could indeed be perceived as an agricultural paradise on earth. Sugar cane, hard wheat, rice, citrus fruits, and colocasia, to name but the most important of the newly arrived plants, proved to take to the new place and their cultivation soon covered significant part of the arable lands along the Nile and in the river's delta. Almost immediately, all of these plants became much coveted and inherent ingredients of the newly emerging, sophisticated Cairene menu.

The importance of the above-mentioned plants for the history of food notwithstanding, the effects of the "commercial revolution of the Mediterranean world"[21] upon the culinary history of Cairo were not less meaningful than those of the agricultural change. The main merit of this development was that, due to the prosperity of the Fatimids in Egypt, it made Cairo—or, more precisely al-Fusṭāṭ—a crossing point and terminus for the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean trade. Not surprisingly, this resulted in increased magnetism of the Egyptian metropolis, which began to attract new waves of settlers who, in turn, made the city's population adopt a more cosmopolitan and sophisticated standard of living. Since a paramount bulk of the Indian Ocean trade was the spice trade, and the significant percentage of settlers were foreigners, the commercial revolution of the Mediterranean meant also the popularization of a more sophisticated and cosmopolitan cuisine within the city.[22]

Furthermore, the course and effects of the commercial transformation together with the results of the agricultural changes, set in motion what

no need of plowing the ground, or sowing it, all being produced as it were spontaneously after draining of the waters of the Nile: but they were mistaken; and I dare assert, by what I have seen with my own eyes, that there is scarce a country where the land has greater need of culture than in Egypt." See Frederick L. Norden, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia*, transl. and ed. Peter Templeman (London: Printed for Lockyer Davis and Charles Reymers, in Holborn, 1757), I, 54.

[20] Such as, for example, olive trees, pistachio trees, apple, and pear trees.

[21] Abraham L. Udovitch, "Fatimid Cairo: Crossroads of the World Trade—from Spain to India," in *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art et son histoire. Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998 sous la direction de Marianne Barrucand* (Paris: Presses de l'Universite de Paris-Sorbonne 1999), 683.

[22] Although it is difficult to state definitely whether in al-Qāhira/al-Fusṭāṭ of the Fatimid epoch the Indian spices were already popular—remarkably, they did not appear among items stored in the Fatimid pantries (as described by Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr or Ibn al-Ma'mūn); however, spices are mentioned in the dietary context by al-Isrā'īlī and Ibn Riḍwān.

might be called a "culinary revolution."[23] The process entirely transformed the cuisine of the al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo area as practiced in the pre- and early Fatimid period. In the new, conglomerate foodstyle, elements incorporated from other cultures prevailed over those originating from the local ancient culinary tradition. The latter, overwhelmed and absorbed, lost its identity in the new urban circumstances.

Some centuries earlier, a similar revolutionary development took place in Baghdad, and its result was the emergence of the so-called "new wave" cuisine.[24] The Baghdadi culinary transformation was a refined process but in fact also a relatively clear one. Triggered by inventive Abbasid cooks, gourmets, and gourmands, it was generally based on intensive borrowing from the Persian and Persian-Indian culinary traditions,[25] sparsely interlaced with elements derived from the Greek medical lore and the Bedouin Arab cooking ideas. Having gained a new look and flavor, supported by the produce of the Mesopotamian agriculture, Oriental spices, and fruits imported from Iran and Syria, the new menu dominated the tables of the elite of the Abbasid Baghdad.[26] And—analogically to what

[23] This proved to have been of a more permanent character than the other two processes. In a sense, the culinary revolution was still far from being over by 1517, the date which symbolically marks the end of the "Cairene" Middle Ages.

[24] The term was first used by Marín and Waines in "Balanced Way," 124; and by David Waines in *In a Caliph's Kitchen* (London, Riad: El-Rayyes Books Ltd., 1989), 7–15. For an interesting presentation of the culinary culture of medieval Baghdad see Nasrallah, *Annals*, 29–55.

[25] Actually, too little is known about Sasanid cuisine to determine its exact influence on the cooking of Baghdad caliphate; see Bernard Rosenberger, "Arab Cuisine and its Contribution to European Eating," in *Food: A Culinary History*, ed. Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 209.

[26] Cf. Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 21. In his "Fann aṭ-Ṭabkh wa-Iṣlāḥ al-Aṭʿima fī-l-Islām," *Al-Mashriq* 41 (1947): 2–3, Ḥabīb Zayyāt suggests the Arabs were the heirs to both the Persian and the Byzantine culinary legacy and imitated both cultures in their food and drink preparations. While the Persian influence upon the future Arab food culture is indisputable, the presumed Byzantine contribution raises certain doubts. First of all, the Byzantine cuisine of the early Middle Ages is difficult to define; second, its popularity among the population of the Byzantine Syria and Byzantine Egypt is more than doubtful; third, as the cuisine of the Byzantine elites (if such was practiced in the provinces at all), the "Byzantine cuisine" travelled back, after the Arab conquest, to the Byzantine mainland, together with those who could have possibly fancied it. In practical terms, then, the post-conquest Arab settlers had little chance to know the Byzantine culinary culture. In fact, the legacy of the latter was inherited not by the Arabs but by the imperial Ottoman cuisine born, many centuries later, as a result of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. See also below, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 256–8.

happened later in Cairo—it absorbed the local, ancient Mesopotamian culinary tradition.[27]

Though they were similar in many aspects, the two—Cairene and Baghdadi—revolutionary processes differed significantly. Compared to the Baghdadi culinary transformation, what occurred in Cairo was far more pervasive, from both dietary and social point of view. Cairo was given a head start and did not fail to make the most of it. For Cairo not only possessed, like Baghdad, all the prerequisites needed for a cuisine to emerge: it also outlived the Abbasid capital and, moreover, it took from the Baghdadi legacy whatever it lacked. The Persian culinary tradition, the Iraqi creative contribution to the adoption of Persian and Arab cooking ideas, Greek dietary theory, and Oriental spices were the most valuable elements of this imported culinary package. Actually, the Greek intellectual input, in the form of the Galenic doctrine of humoral pathology, into the shaping of the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary theory has already been discussed in a number of studies. But as the doctrine had also an immense influence on health consciousness and thus on daily food choices of the Arabic-Islamic urban populations of the Middle Ages, it still merits a commentary.

Very roughly speaking, the Galenic system was based on the concept of four classical elements of fire, earth, air, and water. According to this concept, of these elements—which themselves embodied the qualities of hot, cold, dry, and wet—all things were composed. In the Galenic system, which conditioned both the preventive and curative treatment on the proper diet, the therapy and therapeutics were based on the principle of allopathic contraries, which means that "hot" diseases were to be cured by "cold" remedies. This implied that not only drugs, but that also food and drink were to be applied accordingly: if an individual's temperament was diagnosed as "hot," the ingredients of his diet should have been "cold" and, vice versa, if in his temperament "cold" qualities prevailed, the ingredients

[27] Having studied meticulously the collection of ancient Babylonian recipes now available in Jean Bottéro's English translation, David Waines drew certain conclusions regarding the Mesopotamian origins of the Arabic high culinary tradition. Waines argues that the Arabic recipes which reflect high Iraqi urban culinary culture of the ninth and tenth centuries "point to a tradition which, if not unbroken, at least originated in Mesopotamia, was inherited by the Persian Sasanians who then passed it on, with their own contributions, to be 'resurrected' within the Muslim culture of Abbasid Baghdad;" see Waines, *Patterns*, xxxiii. For hints regarding the ancient Mesopotamian culinary culture see Jean Bottéro, "The Most Ancient Recipes of All," in Waines, *Patterns*, 239–46; idem, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World: Cooking in Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). On Mesopotamian roots of the Abbasid cookery see Nasrallah, *Annals*, 46–54.

of his meals were to be "hot."[28] An effect of deductive reasoning, Galenic medicine was, as a food historian put it, "medically way off-beam," but it "at least had the merit of fundamental consistency."[29]

The doctrine, translated into Arabic by Nestorian physicians working in the eighth and the ninth centuries in Baghdad and Gondēshāpūr,[30] was absorbed eagerly in the Arabic-Islamic world where the subtleties of the Galenic humoral pathology became, in fact, an intellectual discipline which "formed part of the 'liberal education' of a well-educated man."[31] The circle of the high-degree initiates was therefore rather wide and included, apart from professional physicians, also philosophers, theologians, jurists, state officials, etc. many of whom studied, appreciated, and practiced the medicine based on the otherwise pagan Galenic system.[32] By doing so, they naturally contributed to spreading it, albeit in a somewhat simplified version, across the Arabic-Islamic world. It was only a matter of time before the refined Greek teachings referring to foodstuffs, shaped in the form of health recommendations, became part of a broader public domain of knowledge and a theoretical base for the Arabic-Islamic lore of the kitchen. Consequently, the Arabic-Islamic culinary manuals became a

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[28] For a concise presentation of the Galenic theory of humoral pathology see, for example, Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 10–16; also Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 43–5; Nasrallah, *Annals*, 55–64; Friedrun R. Hau, "Die Chirurgie und ihre Instrumente in Orient und Okzident vom 10. bis 16 Jahrhundert," in *Kommunikation*, 317–18; Patrick Faas, *Around the Table of the Romans: Food and Feasting in Ancient Rome* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 137–8; E.N. Anderson, *Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 140–46.

[29] Turner, *Spice*, 165.

[30] For comments on Christian contribution to the Arabic-Islamic medical tradition see Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 5–9; Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arab Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early Abbasid Society* (*2nd–4th/8th–10th centuries*) (Oxon: Routledge, 1998, 118–19; Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 17–35; *EI*², X, "Ṭibb" by E. Savage-Smith; Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 7–16; A.O. Whipple, "Role of Nestorians as the Connecting Link between Greek and Arabic Medicine," *Annals of Medical History* 8 (1936): 313–23. For a concise discussion of Gondēshāpūr and its medical school see A. Shapur Shahbazi and Lutz Richter-Bernburg, "Gondēšāpur," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, http://www.iranica.com.

[31] Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 38.

[32] On the popularity of medical education in the medieval Islamic world, and in Cairo in particular, see Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Fatḥ Allāh and Abū Zakariyya: Physicians under the Mamluks," *Suplément aux AI*, Cahier No 10 (Le Caire: IFAO, 1987): 8–11; Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 26–42 and viii, where Dols points out that Ibn Riḍwān "presumes a knowledge of this [Galenic] pathology on the part of the reader;" Goitein, *Daily Life*, 112. Cf. also Nina Garbutt, "Ibn Jazlah: The Forgotten 'Abbāsid Gastronome," *JESHO* 39/1 (1996): 42. And, for more general information, Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 80–85, 93–95; *EI*², X, "Ṭibb" by idem.

reflection of the same public interest in food and drink that was expressed in dietetic treaties.[33]

An interesting detail was that the Arabic translations of the Hippocratic-Galenic corpus helped to restore classical medicine, in a slightly amended form, to the medieval West, where it had fallen into oblivion (this did not refer to Byzantium which, as the heir to the Greek tradition, never ceased to observe the humoral doctrine).[34] Translated in the fifth/eleventh century from Arabic into Latin, and possibly "updated" by the physicians of the famous Salerno medical school, the ancient Greek texts and the regimen they promoted were soon implemented all over the western Europe. In effect, medieval Europe, like the Arabic-Islamic world, became convinced that all foods diverging from the temperate ideal risked causing a humoral imbalance or, in other words, illness. In Europe, like in the Arabic-Islamic world, cooking became tantamount to dietetics.[35]

The question of the classical roots of the Arabic-Islamic food culture has yet another noteworthy aspect. While discussing the theoretical foundations of the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary tradition, the scholars tend to stress the importance of the Hellenistic heritage and, at the same time, to pass over its ancient Oriental associations, or, more precisely, its Indian associations, as Persian influences are usually well remembered. Actually, the Indian threads were not less meaningful. The Indian medico-culinary tradition reached the Arabic-Islamic world by two ways. The more obvious one was related to the elements from which the Baghdadi "new wave" cuisine derived, through the Persian intermediary, its creative inspiration. The more interesting aspect of the Indian contribution, however, is related to the cultural exchange between Greece and India that took place in pre-Islamic times. Or, more precisely, to the striking parallels between the Greek medical thought and the Ayurvedic medical theory. The fact that these parallels point to the ancient Indian inspirations behind the

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[33] See, for example, most of the first thirty chapters of al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, Helsinki 1987, where natural features of various foods are discussed in the context of humoral theory; similarly *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣinā'a 74, fol. 110a; or chapters dedicated to food and drink in al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, II, 327–404. Also an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, n.d.), XII, most of which is devoted to discussion of various plants, mixtures, compounds, foods, and beverages in the context of their therapeutic values.

For more on the Hellenistic background of the Arabic-Islamic food lore and culinary culture see Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 124–7; Waines, "Dietetics," 230–40.

[34] Andrew Dalby, *Flavours of Byzantium* (Blackawton: Prospect Books, 2003), 47–52, 132–60.

[35] For the Galenic theory as practiced in Europe see Turner, *Spice*, 120–25, 163ff; also Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 162–70.

Galenic doctrine[36] does not diminish the Greek contribution to forming the medieval Arabic-Islamic food culture. But it implies a certain redefinition of the research tactics. In practical terms, this means—to reverse the suggestion once pronounced by Rodinson—that when we analyze an Arabic-Islamic dish in the context of the Graeco-Roman heritage, we also need to remember the ancient Oriental traditions which had influenced the ancient Mediterranean world.[37]

All in all, the essence of the culinary tradition of Baghdad that made this city the gastronomical "navel of the earth" (to paraphrase the expression of medieval Arab geographers) was gradually absorbed by Cairo.[38] The Baghdadi contribution made, in fact, only a part of the Cairene culinary culture. In fact, Mamluk Cairo, "the metropolis of the world..., the hive of nations, and human anthill,"[39] was even more cosmopolitan, more multi-ethnic, more multicultural, and more receptive than the Abbasid Iraqi capital was in the days of its glory. Usually, there is nothing atypical

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[36] Comparison between the ancient Indian, Greek, and Arabic-Islamic dietetics exceeds the scope of the present study. For the concise presentation of diet according to Ayurvedic texts see Lizzie Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7–9, 16; and K.T. Achaya, *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 77–87. For the study of the parallels between certain aspects of the Greek and Ayurvedic medical doctrines, and for cultural exchange between Greece and India before Alexander see Jean Filliozat, *The Classical Doctrine of Indian Medicine* (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1964), 196–237, 238–57. Filliozat is actually one of very few scholars who see the connection between the Greek and Ayurvedic medical doctrines and admit the possibility of the transfer of Indian thought to pre-Alexandrian Greece. The scholars who have studied the medieval Islamic medicine generally do not recognize the possible Indian influence on Greek medical thought but stress the direct association of the former with the Arabic-Islamic world of the Middle Ages. For discussion on medieval Arabic translations of the Ayurvedic texts see Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 21–3, 36; Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine*, 19–20; Gutas, *Greek Thought*, 24–5.

It is, by the way, impressive to observe the routes followed by Indian medical ideas which, taken to the Mediterranean world, were from there transferred via Gondēshāpūr and Baghdad to the Islamic world, then from the Islamic world back to Europe through Salerno on the one hand, and back to India via the Moghul court on the other. The so-called "Unani" medicine as practiced in modern and contemporary India constitutes the epilogue of the story. Considered, above all, an Islamic medical system with "Unani" or Greek (from Ar. Yunānī) roots, it seems to be deprived of old associations with the Ayurvedic doctrine. The two apparently constitute separate healing systems within the area of the so-called "traditional medicine." For comments on Unani medicine see Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 173–5.

[37] Cf. Rodinson, "Venice," 204: "Thus, when we see a general similarity between dishes served in both East and West we need to show that they do not have a common, parallel origin in Graeco-Roman cooking before we adduce any oriental influence."

[38] The process must have started even before Baghdad fell to the Mongols.

[39] The words of Ibn Khaldūn, quoted in Raymond, *Cairo*, 145.

in the fact that progress and urbanization change and enrich the eating and drinking habits, mostly by a process of incorporating features and elements from other cultures.[40] In the case under discussion, however, the change and enrichment proved to mean a thorough transformation, a process in the course of which a new gastronomic entity emerged. In other words, the mature Cairene cuisine was a foodstyle in which elements incorporated from other cultures prevailed distinctly over those originating from the local culinary tradition. Within the city area, indigenous Egyptian foodstuffs had to compete with an array of influences that included Maghrebian couscous, Sicilian cheese, Syro-Palestinian fruits, pistachios and olives, Greek, Catalan, and Provencal honey, Andalusian, Provencal, and Tunisian olive oil, almonds, dried fruits and all kinds of nuts from Apulia, Crete, and Rhodes, Italian and Catalan saffron, Oriental spices, edible plants brought in by the agricultural revolution, and, in times when these products were sparse in Egypt, wheat from Naples, Sicily and Cyprus as well as Sicilian sugar and molasses.[41] And, last but not least, Italian, Cretan, and Cypriot wines, came to Cairo semi-legally, particularly from the ninth/fifteenth century on. But imported ingredients alone, diverse and numerous though they were, would not have managed to overshadow the local culinary tradition. What truly contributed to its marginalization in the Cairene menu were not only foreign goods but also foreign ideas, such as the ancient Greek dietary lore, Nestorian doctors' health food, and the Persian culinary legacy converted in Iraq into the new wave cuisine.

The transforming power of the culinary revolution could work due to the waves of foreign migrants who, moving to the young, thriving, and receptive Egyptian capital from their home countries, carried their particular foreign tastes, preferences, habits, and know-how with them. Of what they could find in their new neighborhood and of what they brought, new standards were born. Therefore, the history of the Cairene culinary culture is, above all, a history of outsiders bringing in and implanting in their new home town diverse culinary influences. Similarly to the British in India who adopted recipes, ingredients, techniques, and garnishes from all over

[40] Cf. Günay Kut, "Turkish Culinary Culture," in *Timeless Tastes—Turkish Culinary Culture*, ed. Ersu Pekin and Ayse Sümer (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Vakfi, 1999), 38.

[41] See Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levantine Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 23, 160–2, 208, 237, 268, 336, 341, 466.

the subcontinent and combined them in a coherent repertoire of dishes,[42] Cairo adopted analogous elements from all over the Islamic world.

Generally speaking, there is nothing unusual in the fact that movements of peoples are followed by a number of changes in menus of both the newcomers and their hosts. Groups learn, imitate, and borrow all the time. When migrants come to a new land, they gradually change their foodways. Eventually, influenced by an ongoing interaction with the host societies, they usually come to eat like the majority in their new home. At the same time, subjugated peoples adapt to new customs but they also cling to many of their own traditions.[43] What was remarkable in the case of Cairo was that it was the newcomers who, arriving over centuries in an uninterrupted manner and from all possible directions, seem to have determined the spirit and form of the culinary culture of the host city. In this sense, the process of making the medieval Cairene menu was much more complicated than, say, that of the birth of the Indian-Spanish menu whose appearance was sudden, clear and easily definable. The first culinary effects of the clash of the two peoples and the two cultures appeared as soon as the first Spanish conquistador married an Indian wife: his tastes made her cook—from Mexican produce—what he liked, and eliminate from the kitchen what he disliked. Since the Spanish settled all over Mexico and not only in its main urban center, the process became, in a sense, universal for the entire country. Within a very short time the new Spanish provisions (from pigs to Oriental spices) started to enrich the contents of the local pots.[44] The first generation of the new nation grew up together with the new cuisine and upon the appearance of their descendants a new standard was apparently set—the following generations witnessed only cosmetic changes.[45]

The birth of the Cairene cuisine, conditioned by the three underlying transformative processes, was very different. First of all, the setting of new standards, with all the countless elements of foreign food customs

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[42] Collingham, *Curry*, 118.

[43] Cf. Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 203–7; Ewald Kislinger, "Christians of the East: Rules and Realities of the Byzantine Diet," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 205.

[44] On crops brought to the New World after 1492 see Paul Lunde, "Muslims and Muslim Technology in the New World," *Aramco World* 43/3 (Exibition Issue): 39–41.

[45] The final product being what is known today as the "Tex-Mex" cuisine. For the history of Mexican cookery see Susana Osorio-Mrożek, *Meksyk od kuchni. Książka niekucharska* (Kraków: Universitas, 2004); see also Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 169, where the author mentions "the wonderful Spanish-Arab-Mexican fusions that are now usually regarded as the highest achievements of Mexican food."

continuously imported to Cairo, depended on the almost infinite quantity and diversity of influences among which the "regional food of peasants"[46] was probably not the most important. Besides, these influences, reproduced in the street and palace kitchens, were not verified by a two-culture society, but by a culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse city population. Moreover, the process was limited, in principle, to one urban center and, due to its permanent character, was something more than a one-time event.

Different though they were, the Cairene medieval cuisine and the Indian-Spanish one did not constitute disparate phenomena. In fact, as "self-conscious traditions of cooking and eating,"[47] they shared the basic prerequisites of their own existence. Interestingly, the set of factors that govern the emergence of a cuisine, and that is valid for both Spanish Mexico and medieval Cairo, was originally defined in reference to China during the reign of the house of Chao (960–1279 C.E.) where, to use Michael Freeman's expression, "the first of the world's cuisines" emerged. China's right to boast the priority in this respect notwithstanding, the definition of what made the appearance of its cuisine proved to be universally applicable: the availability and abundance of ingredients brought by favorable developments in agriculture and commerce, the opportunity to draw from diverse cooking traditions, the presence of a sizable corps of critical, adventuresome eaters willing to try unfamiliar food, and, finally, the presence of open-minded cooks and diners ready to care more for gustatory concerns than for uncritical adherence to tradition or ritual.[48]

In the mid-first/seventh century the traditional Egyptian culinary culture easily prevailed over the poor menu of the Bedouin Arab newcomers. By that time it seemed improbable that the firm and millennia-old local food customs might one day simply diffuse in another culture, not only new, but also strange and infinite in its diversity. And yet, this is what happened, despite the rule that people prefer to cook from what they know and have at hand, and despite the fact that food habits are not easily altered. True,

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[46] Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 104–5; cf. also Rodinson's thesis that "examination of the [medieval Arab] recipes amply demonstrates how this [i.e. Arabic-Islamic] cuisine had absorbed local traditions, making use of ancient techniques, adopting exotic elements and enriching the whole with greater complexity and refinement. Peasant cookery obviously formed the basis." Rodinson, "Studies," 149. As observed earlier on, in the case of Cairo the "peasant cookery" forming the basis of the city cuisine is not so obvious.

[47] Michael Freeman, "Sung," in Chang, *Food*, 144–5.

[48] Freeman, "Sung," 144–5; also discussed in Goody, *Cooking*, 98–9.

the area where this phenomenon occurred was restricted to one urban center, the al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo agglomeration. But within this limited area the dominance of imported elements over local tradition proved to be overpowering. So much so that the medieval Cairene menu, which emerged, after all, on the territory boasting one of the most ancient food traditions of the world, could not be defined as what sociologists call "traditional menu," that is a menu that draws its "recommendations and rules of food choice and combination from customary practice,"[49] unless we accept that the "customary practice" can consist in this case not so much of the local tradition but, primarily, of imported elements—customary as they were for those who carried them to Cairo.

2. High and Low Cooking: Exchange and Diffusion

Throughout the Middle Ages, the city of Cairo was divided into two separate worlds: the palace of the Fatimid caliphs or, later, the sultan's mighty Citadel on the one hand, and the extra-palatial space on the other. Whether under the Fatimids or the Mamluks, the two worlds of Cairo had always little in common and, separated by a gap crossed only by civil servants and a number of religious officials, always lived their separate lives. Usually, any attempt to discuss the aliments of a population by using the records relating to the tables of its rulers is simply pointless. For, usually—and medieval Cairo was not an exception—the ruling and the ruled have to eat differently. It so happens, however, that in the case of Cairo the gap between these two groups was not always as impassable as might be expected. All the differences between them notwithstanding, the nutritional aspects of their lives intermingled. True, the Cairenes never accepted the Mamluks' favorites, such as horse meat and koumiss, while the differences in income must have influenced the quality of the consumed food. Apart from that, however, the cuisine of the royal palace and the cuisine of the city streets did not constitute entirely separate realms.

As far as the relation between the menu of the dominant elites and that of the more ordinary people is concerned, there is no simple answer to the question who adopted whose ingredients or who imitated whose ways of food preparation. There are, however, clues indicating that this was not

[49] Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 67.

a one-way flow and that each of them influenced the other. As far as the street-palace direction is concerned, it was conditioned, above all, by the fact that the royal pantries and kitchens depended heavily on the crops of the local soil. Moreover, they often provided themselves with both semi-finished food products and ready-to-eat food articles in the local markets. The same was practiced by individual officials, both high- and low-ranking personnel employed in the palaces, all of whom used the catering services of the marketplace. Another channel of transmitting the elements of the popular cuisine to the royal tables must have been the local cooks who, employed in the palatial kitchens, contributed to upgrading elements of the popular cuisine.

As for the transfer of values in the opposite direction, it routinely followed a pattern typical for processes of this kind: the fashions and tastes that radiate from the upper classes (often styled "leisure," or "bourgeois," also when discussed in the Arabic-Islamic context) are imitated by the lower orders of the society. In this particular case, the transfer of the royal foodstyle standards down to the extra-palatial city space occurred on a number of levels. In general, the development consisted in the fact that the food processed in the caliphs' or sultans' kitchens was served not only to the caliph or the sultan, but to various groups of their subjects as well. These included members of the elite circles of all kinds who often shared the royal meals, servants fed with leftovers, as well as troops and ordinary subjects among whom special charitable meals were distributed, particularly on festive occasions.[50]

Apart from this routine track, the process of the diffusion of *haute cuisine* as occurred in Cairo followed also another, more extraordinary, though not an absolutely unique, pattern. Based on the enterprising inventiveness of professional palace cooks, the pattern was actually two-pronged. The two individual developments which formed it were isolated, hardly noticeable, one-time—though years-lasting—events. Nevertheless, they were meaningful enough to become milestones not only in this process, but in the entire history of the Cairene medieval culinary culture.

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[50] In the Fatimid epoch, the food items distributed among subjects on various festive occasions included, for example, various kinds of a dish called *harīsa*, fish such as or striped mullet, or sweets such as *qāhiriyya* and *zulābiyya*. For references see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 3. 'Chronicles and annalistic sources,' p. 46, n. 87. On Fatimid practices in this respect see, for example, Paula Sanders, *Ritual, Politics and the City in Fatimid Cairo* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 75–81, 110–11, 114. For some comments regarding the Mamluk policy see Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 209, 213.

The first of them was made possible by the open-handedness of Khumārawayh, son of Aḥmad Ibn Ṭulūn, and for twelve years the ruler of Egypt (270–282/884–896). A big spender whose love for extravagant luxury has become proverbial, Khumārawayh built—apart from some other, more memorable structures—a palace for the royal harem, that is for the mothers of his children, the mothers of his father's children, as well as for the children themselves. Altogether the group must have been numerous, and the edifice considerable, for Aḥmad Ibn Ṭulūn alone was said to have had 33 sons and daughters.[51] In the new building, each woman could enjoy a spacious room of her own. To each of the rooms a number of servants was assigned and to each rich meals were catered. To feed the crowd, the cooks working in the palace prepared huge quantities of chicken, mutton, *ḥalwa* sweets, various kinds of marzipan, (*lawzīnaj* and *fālūdhaj*), *qaṭāʾif* or pancakes folded around a sweet nut filling, big loaves of bread, as well as *ʿaṣīda*, possibly a pudding of pounded rice boiled in milk, boiled pounded chicken, syrup, and tail fat.[52]

Considering the number of those who dwelled in the building, the quantities of food they consumed must have been high. Yet, the cooks of the palace kitchens apparently not only handled the situation but were also able to prepare what significantly exceeded the harem's demand and, moreover, to sell the surplus of their culinary production at the gate of the edifice. As the news about the new cooks' stands spread in the area, people started to come from afar to the harem palace gate to buy whatever of the strange kinds of food they liked. An enterprise such as that started by the cooks of Khumārawayh's harem must have been convenient for the traditionally hospitable people living with the tradition of unannounced

[51] See Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 20; cf. also, for example, Jalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥaḍra fī Tārīkh al-Qāhira* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, 1998), I, 515. The Khumārawayh's harem palace must have been located in al-Qaṭā'iʿ, the palatine city that Aḥmad Ibn Ṭulūn built for himself north of al-Fusṭāṭ (today the area between the Mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn and the Citadel); cf. Raymond, *Cairo*, 26–7.

[52] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 58. An original *ʿaṣīda*, such as that mentioned in the *ḥadīths*, must have been a very simple country-style dish, comparable to what Edward Lane described as "wheat-flour moistened and stirred about with clarified butter, and cooked" (Edward W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate 1863–93), 2060. A preparation of this kind would hardly be a part of the palatial cuisine of the Tulunids. In the account in question, however, Ibn Taghrī Birdī does not mention just "*ʿaṣīda*" but "*ʿaṣīda* which is today [the ninth/fifteenth century] called *maʾmūniyya*." Understandably, *maʾmūniyya*, allegedly invented by the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 833), was more refined than *ʿaṣīda* and included ingredients such as rice, milk, chicken, syrup, tail fat, and musk, rose-water or camphor. On *ʿaṣīda* and *maʾmūniyya* see below, chapter II.1.C. "Rice," pp. 148–9 and 147 respectively.

visits. And for the Fusṭāṭis it apparently was, if we are to believe the words of a much later chronicler. From then on, "whenever anybody was called on by a guest, he simply went out and rushed to the gate of the harem palace. There he found and bought all what he needed to treat his guest to, and what he himself would never be able to prepare."[53]

It is difficult to define for how long the cooks' stands prospered by the palace gate. Probably at least as long as the descendants of Aḥmad Ibn Ṭulūn were there to rule the place. It is impossible to say whether the enterprise outlived the dynasty. On the one hand, the palaces of the Tulunids were systematically destroyed after the Abbasid expedition put an end to their rule in Egypt in 292/905. It is quite possible that this was also the end of the takeaway food business which until then had been flourishing by the harem palace gate. On the other hand, the new Ikhshidid dynasty which took power in Egypt in the 330s/940s did not save on food, either. It is therefore also possible that under their pitiable and short-lived rule, the Fusṭāṭis could benefit from the overproduction of the palatial kitchens in a way similar to that which they had practiced in the days of Khumārawayh. Besides, the demand could be now high enough to allow the town to start developing the network (however modest) of its own street cooks, independent of the kitchens of the frequently changing rulers.[54]

Be that as it may, the initiative of the cooks assigned to the harem palace of Khumārawayh marked a turning point in the daily life of the Fusṭāṭis. Whatever happened to their business after the death of the extravagant ruler, the enterprising cooks seemed to have hit the right spot in the local developing and receptive market. By providing the town with their much needed service, they set in motion a process that, once liked by the Fusṭāṭis,

[53] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 57–8. Interestingly, a very similar development occurred over three hundred years later in Damascus whose Ayyubid ruler, an-Nāṣir Yūsuf, held giant food banquets on a daily basis. In an obituary note dedicated to al-Malik an-Nāṣir (d. 659/1261), Ibn Kathīr quotes a story according to which for each of these daily banquets 400 sheep were prepared, as well as chickens, geese, and other kinds of birds cooked and fried with various dishes. As an-Nāṣir and his court were apparently not able to cope witch such quantities of food, most of it was taken away barely touched. Then it was sold by the citadel's gate at a very low price. Not surprisingly, many house owners, instead of cooking at home, switched to various dishes which they bought at the citadel's gate and which they otherwise could never have afforded (Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-n-Nihāya fī-t-Tārīkh*, ed. Aḥmad Abū Mulḥim et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1985–9), XIII, 254; also Muḥammad Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafayāt*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1973–1974), IV, 362.

[54] See Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 334, where in the annal for 352/963 street cooks are mentioned.

could not be easily brought to a halt. First, in its course the *haute cuisine* dishes irrevocably got out of the royal palace and, as the taste for them spread, became a part of the menu of the ordinary people. This means that in the al-Fusṭāṭ area the barrier between the *haute* and the ordinary cuisine was never as steady, invariable, and impenetrable as it might be supposed if judged according to a popular definition separating between the *haute* and the low cooking. Second, the idea of enjoying the take-away food, although probably not absolutely unknown in the area, now gained a new dimension.[55] The ready-to-eat fancy dishes naturally became a tempting and competitive alternative to all the arduous daily operations related to preparing food at home. And, instead of worrying whether the public oven owner might burn the coveted dish, it allowed one to enjoy the comfort of choosing from the professional cooks' offerings.

As for the long era of the Fatimid caliphs that followed, it seems rather impossible that their cuisine, secluded in the palace-city of al-Qāhira, could penetrate the residential areas the way the Tulunid dishes did. However strict the seclusion was, it nevertheless was not everlasting. Its end, prompted by of the fall of the Fatimids, marked another milestone and, almost 300 years after Khumārawayh's reign, another turning point in the history of the Cairene food culture. If we are to believe Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, an Andalusian intellectual who first came to Cairo in 640/1242, in those days there were in the city "female slave cooks who learned to cook in the palaces of the Fatimids. Their skills in cooking were admirable and their superiority well-established."[56] This short inconspicuous statement may prove to be one of the crucial records for the history of the city culinary culture. True, if any of the Fatimid cooks were still there when Ibn Saʿīd visited Cairo, they must have been at best in their late 80s by that time: unusual but not impossible.[57] There is also no other reason to question the authenticity of Ibn Saʿīd's information or his version of events. True, there exists evidence, meager as it is, proving that in

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[55] It very much possible that the cooks of Khumārawayh's harem palace only gave a new energy to what had already been practiced on some rather simple, if not austere, scale.

[56] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 28–9; also quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 367.

[57] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī wrote down his remark in the present tense: "wa fīhā jawārī ṭabbākhāt." Even if most of the Fatimid cooks had passed away by 639/1241, they were apparently very much alive in a collective Fusṭāṭi/Cairene memory, perhaps because their cooking businesses, then possibly run by their successors, were doing quite well. As far as employment of women in the Fatimid palaces is concerned, cf. also record by Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 92–4, indicating that a woman was a chief steward (*al-muʿallima*) of the caliphal palaces.

the aftermath of Saladin's coup of 560s/1170s, the new Ayyubid masters of Egypt took over the palatial cooks of the fallen Fatimid dynasty.[58] Yet, this does not deny Ibn Saʿīd's report. It may simply mean that of all the numerous cooks employed by the Fatimids, some were kept to serve in the sultans' kitchens of the Ayyubids, while some others were indeed fired by the new masters.

Those who had lost their jobs had no choice but to transfer to the city streets and to set up their own public cooking businesses in the open air. Their enterprise, started out of necessity, proved to be bound for success. The excellence of these women and their experience in high cooking was of fundamental importance. This, however, was but one aspect of the phenomenon. The prosperity of their cooking venture must have been facilitated by other reasons, too. One of them was related to the condition of the street cookery, which by that time might not have been well developed within the al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo city limits. The street cooks' offer was, very probably, too simple to compete with a more refined and more diverse choice that could be purchased at the stands of the ex-Fatimid cooks.[59] What was probably of key importance for the success of the latter, however, was the fact that their dismissal from the palaces and transfer to the streets coincided with a mass influx of new settlers that

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[58] See the remark by the anonymous author of *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilā-l-Ḥabīb*, a cookery book whose original version was compiled during the Ayyubid era, about "*al-kubbād al-murākibī* that was brought from the house of al-Malik al-Kāmil by some of the caliphal [i.e. Fatimid] palace slave-servants" (*Wuṣla*, 689 and *Kanz*, 207, n. 576) and the recipe for "*kaʿk Ḥāfiẓiyya* that was prepared by al-Ḥāfiẓiyya, a female slave servant of al-Malik al-ʿĀdil al-Kabīr" (*Wuṣla*, 658); also mentioned by Zayyāt, "Fann aṭ-Ṭabkh," 15.

[59] In the chronicle of al-Musabbiḥī, *harīsa* (meat, chicken, or date porridge) is the only dish mentioned by this author as sold ready-made in the bazaars of al-Fusṭāṭ (al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 46). Although we learn that specialties like *kishkiyya* (a preparation of broth, vegetables, and the so-called *kishk*, crushed wheat mixed with yoghurt and then dried in the sun) and *ṭabāhaja* (a sour-spicy preparation of chopped meat) were also consumed, it is impossible to define whether they were available from the street cooks. The context in which the two dishes are mentioned is rather obscure and does not explain much regarding their possible street production: they were prepared and served to certain pious old *shaykh* after he had suddenly realized he would die in a few days (al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 93). The Fatimid chronicles mention food almost entirely in the context of the caliphal palace, relating the accounts either to the royal kitchen production and the elites' consumption or food-sponsoring and food-distributing policy. As such they are not too informative as far as the Cairene's daily diet is concerned. The earliest "Cairene" *ḥisba* manual, that by ash-Shayzarī (the late sixth/twelfth century), names ca fifteen specialties sold by the street food dealers. While it is not impossible that the list is valid for the Fatimid times, it is, however, difficult to prove. The same concerns food preparations and food producers mentioned by Goitein in the context of Geniza records; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 114–15.

followed Saladin's coup d'etat. Some of these settlers must have become the Fatimid cooks' rivals in the business. Most of them, however, formed a constantly increasing crowd of customers. Be that as it may, the transfer of the Fatimid cooks did not only promote the palace cuisine in the city streets. It also marked a turning point in the culinary history of Cairo and the true beginning of the unique Cairene street cookery. As such, it was comparable, by the way, to the developments following the French Revolution, when the talented chefs or *maîtres de table*, employed until then by aristocrats, lost their masters through emigration or the guillotine and, trying to earn a living, contributed to the proliferation of quality restaurants in Paris.[60] Similarly to what happened many centuries later with Parisian chefs, the transfer of the caliphal cooking standards down to the extra-palatial city space triggered the process of turning Cairo into a culinary capital of the contemporaneous world.

3. Street Food Business

A. *Technical Preconditions*

What seems to have proved crucial for the success of Cairo as the unrivalled culinary center of the later Middle Ages was that with time the street cookery almost entirely dominated the food culture of the city. But it probably could not have happened otherwise in the place where—if we are to believe foreign travelers—people generally did not cook at home and instead used the services offered by cooks in city streets and bazaars.[61] From the accounts of Westerners who visited Cairo between the

[60] Jean-Robert Pitte, *French Gastronomy. The History and Geography of Passion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 118; 119–24.

[61] See Felix Fabri, *Voyage en Egypte de Felix Fabri 1483*, trans. and ed. Jacques Masson (Le Caire: IFAO, 1975), II, 568; Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya arabska albo do grobu s. Katarzyny Panny y Męczenniczki, którą Aniołowie Święci w Arabiey na gorze Synai pogrzebli, Zacnych ludzi niektórych rodu Niemieckiego, w roku pańskim 1483 pielgrzymowanie*, trans. Andrzej Wargocki (*Die Reise ins Heilige Land: Ein Reisebericht aus dem Jahre 1483*) (Kraków: W Drukarni Symona Kempiniego, 1610), 65–6; Emmanuel Piloti, *L'Égypte au commencement du quinzième siècle d'apres le Traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète* (*incipit 1420*) (Le Caire: Imp. Université Fouad I, 1950), 108; Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49, 167; Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, trans. and ed. Malcolm Letts (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1926), 100; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109–10; Jean Thenaud, *Le Voyage d'Outremer* (*Égypte, Mont Sinay, Palestine*)*, suivi de la relation de l'ambassade de Domenico Trevisan auprès du Soudan d'Égypte 1512*, ed. Charles Schefer (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971), 47, 210; Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91; Jan Sommer, in *Voyages en Egypte des*

thirteenth and seventeenth centuries one could learn, for example, that "no citizen, however rich, cooks at home"[62] or that "ordinarily the Saracens do not cook at home."[63] The others noticed that the city's inhabitants did not light the fire at home,[64] that "heathen seldom cook in their houses"[65] or that only the rich did.[66]

True, these accounts alone are by no means conclusive. As is usually the case with the authors of travel literature, many European visitors to Egypt, most of whom were pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, borrowed from earlier authors, confabulated, or inserted nonsense information into their accounts. Some, unable to verify data provided by the local guides, simply believed all absurdities and confabulations. Some might have repeated hearsay while others, having seen the enormous quantity of street kitchens, only inferred that the city's inhabitants did not cook at home. However, while ascertaining the credibility of such records, one should not overlook the fact that during their sojourn in Cairo Europeans lodged in private houses or apartments.[67] Moreover, some visited Cairene homes. This implies that many of them must have had a chance to make first-hand observations regarding the problem of cooking or not cooking at home. One should also keep in mind that a foreigner, even if naïve or biased, would notice things which a local person never cared for. And so, a local person would not record the routine practices of his or her daily life, particularly if these practices were not actually practiced in his or her location. In other words, a Cairene would hardly make note of the fact that he did not have cooking facilities in his apartment, that he customarily did not cook in the home, or that the rest of the city's population

années 1589, 1590 & 1591. Le Vénitien anonyme, Le Signeur de Villamont, Le Hollandais Jan Sommer, trans. Carla Burri, Nadine Sauneron and Paul Bleser, ed. Carla Burri and Serge Sauneron (Le Caire: IFAO, 1971), 296–7; Christophe Harant, *Voyage en Egypte de Christophe Harant de Polžic et Bezdružic 1598*, trans. and ed. Claire and Antoine Brejnik (Le Caire: IFAO, 1972), 208, 212; Wild, *Voyages*, 179, 183; Michael Heberer von Bretten, *Voyages en Egypte de Michael Heberer von Bretten, 1585–1586*, trans. and ed. Oleg V. Volkoff (Le Caire: IFAO, 1976), 62; Gabriel Brémond, *Voyage en Égypte de Gabriel Brémond 1643–1645*, trans. and ed. Georges Sanguin (Le Caire: IFAO, 1974), 48. For general comments on street cookery in medieval Islam see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 30–1.

[62] Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49.

[63] Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 167.

[64] Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 568.

[65] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109; von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya*, 66; Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 108.

[66] Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91.

[67] This was due to the fact that Cairo lacked any kind of hostel that would offer the Europeans lodgings for the night; for more details see below, pt. II, chapter III.1. "Public consumption," pp. 366–8.

did not do that, either. There were exceptions, though. While discussing the character of the Egyptians (*ahl* Miṣr), al-Maqrīzī made a remark that "one never sees them storing provisions at home, as the inhabitants of other countries customarily do. Instead, they get their foodstuffs from the market every day, and they do this in the morning and in the evening." His observation, which was to attest to the idea that "one of the natural features of the Egyptians is that they avoid thinking of consequences,"[68] indirectly confirms the hypothesis regarding the scarcity of cooking facilities in Cairene homes.

Interestingly, as far as this aspect of the European travel accounts is concerned, there are circumstances which seem to support their authors' information. They pertain to the presumed absence of kitchens in Cairene homes. Some years ago, the question of Cairene kitchens ignited a scholarly controversy. The unfortunate statement of Gaston Wiet about the general absence of kitchens in the domestic buildings of Cairo was disputed by S.D. Goitein who, having at hand the Geniza documents which "show that almost all of the described [Fusṭāṭi] houses had a kitchen (and large ones had even more than one)," used them to argue for the opposite conclusion.[69] In fact both of these opinions somehow oversimplify the problem. As for Wiet's book on Cairo, it is by design of a more popular than scholarly character, and thus contains, understandably enough, certain unsupported generalizations. This also refers to the statement on the absence of kitchens that Wiet seems to have based solely upon the travel accounts produced by European visitors to Cairo.

Goitein's arguments, on the other hand, introduce some degree of confusion into the question. First of all, Cairo as discussed by Wiet and al-Fusṭāṭ as discussed by Goitein were not really the same. The two centers differed significantly, also as far as domestic architecture was concerned. This also means that simple application of the patterns of the al-Fusṭāṭ type of house to the later Cairene type is not fully justified,[70] and implies that it is impossible to arrive at one answer for the two cities.

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[68] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 50.

[69] Gaston Wiet, *Cairo, City of Art and Commerce* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 89; Goitein, "Urban Housing," 5–23; see also idem, *Daily Life*, 142, where it is said that "a [Fusṭāṭi] kitchen was equipped with an oven for baking, frying and cooking."

[70] No indication has been revealed that would prove such a transition; see Hazem I. Sayed, "The Development of the Cairene *Qāʿa*: Some Considerations," *AI* 23 (1987): 31. As Sayed pointed out, as far as the domestic architecture is concerned, the gap between the late Fatimid and the Ayyubid periods "has remained outside our grasp."

Secondly, Goitein's assertion about a kitchen being "a common fixture" in al-Fusṭāṭ is, in a way, weakened, if not disaffirmed, by other statements of his. He maintains, for example, that there was "very little heating and not much cooking"[71] (although "the Jews did more cooking at home than others")[72] or, elsewhere, that "in those days ... all dishes, hot or cold, were prepared by specialists in the bazaars. All a smart housewife had to do was to tell her husband in the morning what to bring home for dinner in the evening."[73]

The question of kitchen space in the houses of al-Fusṭāṭ is further blurred by the fact that the Geniza references to kitchens located on the ground floor do not seem to be sufficiently supported by archeological evidence. Judging by the published part of the excavation reports dealing with the site of al-Fusṭāṭ, none of the 39 recorded middle-class houses which were uncovered between 1912 and 1970s, and which date back to the Tulunid and Fatimid periods, includes traces of hearth. Or, at least, no publication mentions such an element.[74] It seems that the only reported trace of a fireplace is the one mentioned by Władysław Kubiak and George Scanlon, who excavated the site of Fustat-C, or apparently a proletarian neighborhood of the town.[75] Naturally enough, the absence of hearth traces does not exclude the use of movable ovens, or braziers (*kānūn*) which could be used in the courtyard, in a ventilated room, or on the roof. However comfortable and useful such devices were, they had their limitations, though, particularly as far as the efficiency was concerned. Besides, if such braziers were relatively popular in al-Fusṭāṭ, the excavations would reveal remains

[71] This was to explain the infrequency of fires in the town; see Goitein, "Urban Housing," 10.

[72] Cf. Goitein, *Daily Life*, 141.

[73] S.D. Goitein, "The Mentality of the Middle Class in Medieval Islam," in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, ed. S.D. Goitein (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 251. Such an attitude towards food preparation seems to contrast with the ways of the medieval Mesopotamians, whose "kitchen and its proper management was of central importance to the smooth running of the family household's daily life;" see Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 18.

[74] Aly Bahgat and Albert Gabriel, who headed the first team excavating the site of al-Fusṭāṭ, stated in their report that "les aliments étaient préparés sur quelques fourneaux de terre, allumés dans la cour ou dans une petite pièce: on ne retrouve aucun dispositif spécialement destiné cet usage;" see Aly Bahgat et Albert Gabriel, *Fouilles d'al Fustat* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1921), 86. For a comprehensive review of the archeological evidence for the study of the domestic buildings of al-Fusṭāṭ, see Ostrasz, "Archeological Material," 57–86. For Goitein's description of Fusṭāṭi houses see his *Daily Life*, 56–82.

[75] Kubiak and Scanlon describe the uncovered fireplace as being "a typical asymmetrical fireplace;" according to them, "one can hardly doubt that this section was originally a kitchen." See Kubiak and Scanlon, *Fustat Expedition. Fustat-C*, 21.

of at least a number of them. Yet, the published excavation reports mention fragments of only one footed stucco brazier, or food warmer uncovered in the site of al-Fusṭāṭ.[76]

As for Cairo, the situation is much less ambiguous thanks to the data recorded in Mamluk *waqfiyyas*, or deeds of charitable endowments, that clarify things to a significant degree. Generally speaking, as far as kitchen space is concerned, the documents indicate two basic tendencies in residential architecture of the city: 1) large residences (*dār*)—such as those belonging to high-ranking Mamluk amirs, highest officials of the religious establishment, big merchants, etc.—had one or two kitchen spaces.[77] 2) More modest houses and apartments or, more precisely, living units in the apartment buildings (*rabʿ*) in which the upper middle-class seems to have lived, did not have an independent kitchen.[78]

Nelly Hanna sheds additional light on the question of kitchen space in the Cairene houses. Her research, though concerning the Ottoman period, introduces elements that, obvious differences notwithstanding, may also prove valid for the earlier epochs. Thus, according to a number of the

[76] For description of the fragments of the eleventh-century Egyptian food warmer see George T. Scanlon, "Fusṭāṭ Expedition: Preliminary Report 1968: Pt. II," *JARCE* 13 (1976), 70. Cf. also below, n. 85.

[77] Janusz Bylinski, "Darb ibn al-Baba: A Quarter in Mamluk Cairo in the Light of Waqf Documents," *JARCE* 31 (1994): 203–22; Jean-Claude Garcin, "Habitat médiéval et histoire urbaine à Fustat et au Caire," in *Palais et maisons du Caire. I—Époque mamelouke* (*XIII–XVI siècles*), ed. Jean-Claude Garcin et al. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1982), 197, 198. In such residences, kitchen was generally accompanied by *ḥāṣils* (storerooms), *ṭishtkhānas* (stores for vessels), or *makhzans* (storage rooms); see Bylinski, "Darb ibn al-Baba," *passim*; also plans of residential buildings included by Jacques Revault in his "L'Architecture domestique du Caire a l'époque mamelouke (XIII–XVI siècles)," in Garcin, *Palais et maisons*, I, 19–144. Although all kinds of storerooms can be traced in Revault's plans, it seems that no kitchen was identified in the palatial buildings he studied. One cannot rule out that in certain residences kitchen was located in a separate building. While discussing in his table manners manual the banquets held by relatively well-to-do persons, Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Jazzār (d. 669/1270 or 679/1281) speaks about kitchens located outside the host's house; *Fawāʾid al-Mawāʾid*, British Museum Ms. Or. 6388a, fol. 8a. We cannot tell, however, whether he meant the kitchen belonging to the house or the street kitchen that catered for parties.

[78] In fact no study of the *rabʿ* structures confirms the existence of any kitchen space there; cf., for example, Ibrahim, "Middle-Class Living Units," 24–30; idem, "Residential Architecture," 47–59; Jean-Claude Garcin, "Du rabʿ à la masrîya. Reflexion sur les evolutions et les emprunts des formules d'habitat dans le monde musulman de Méditerranée à l'époque médiévale," *AI* 31 (1997): 61–80; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39. Revault's assertion about kitchens being located, together with pantries and toilets, in antechambers of the *rabʿ* units, should be treated with caution. His own footnote suggests that he might have confused kitchen with a recess for water jars (*bayt azyār*); Revault, "Architecture," 140.

eleventh/seventeenth- and the twelfth/eighteenth-century documents she studied, there were two kinds of kitchen space in the Cairene houses. The regular kitchen space, equipped with *kānūn*, or a mud-brick oven, and with a ventilation system,[79] was almost exclusively a prerogative of the rich.[80] In their residences such a room was situated on the ground floor and served as the main kitchen space. The other kind of kitchen, often located on the upper floor, constituted a niche, or recess, adjacent to one of the apartment's rooms; the niche, however, had neither an oven nor a chimney. In large residences, such niches served as additional kitchen space.[81] In average, or more modest houses (*maisons moyennes*), it constituted the main and the only kitchen.[82] Various activities connected with food preparation, excluding the cooking itself, could be carried out in it. Actually, it is not clear whether, in the documents studied by Hanna, this quasi kitchen was also called "*maṭbakh*" (literally "a place where cooking takes place")—her study seems to indicate that such a niche, adjacent to

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[79] *Kānūn* (*pl. kawānīn*) was a brick oven equipped with iron grills under which the fire was lit. The pots or cauldrons were placed on the grills. Such an oven could be constructed along the wall, sometimes embedded in a cut in the paving. Ventilation was provided by a chimney in the form of either an opening in the roof (*madkhana*) or pitched roof (*jamālūn*); see Hanna, "La cuisine," 406; idem, *Habiter au Caire. La maison moyenne et ses habitants aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1991), 154. Cf. Lane's remarks on "several small receptacles for fire, constructed on a kind of bench of brick," a device which was still used in the nineteenth-century houses of the well-to-do Cairenes; see Lane, *Manners*, 561, n. 3; cf. also Lane's description of an oven (*furn*) of the peasant house of Lower Egypt ("it resembles a wide bench or seat, and is about breast-high; it is constructed of brick and mud," ibid., 31).

[80] 84.4 percent (317 of 375) of the average houses (*maisons moyennes*) did not have a separate kitchen. Of the remaining 15.6 percent, 14 percent were provided with one, and 1.6 with two (or more) kitchens; see Hanna, *Habiter au Caire*, 142.

[81] According to Hanna, in the late eighteenth century in the Cairene residences there appears an element called *maṭbakh al-ḥarīm*, or kitchen of the *ḥarīm*. Al-Jabartī, an Egyptian chronicler of the twelfth/eighteenth and thirteenth/nineteenth centuries, confirms the existence of such a kitchen in each of the rich people's houses and gives an additional explanation as its character. According to his account, the main kitchen, located on the ground floor, was the men's kitchen, and it was here that everyday meals for all of the master's household and his guests were prepared, while the other was located in the *ḥarīm* or the female (upper) part of the house; see al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, I, 288. Cf. also Lane's information (also the nineteenth century) referring to polygamy: "Most of men of wealth, or of moderate circumstances, and even many men of the lower orders, if they have two or more wives, have for each a separate house. The wife has, or can oblige her husband to give her, a particular description of lodging, which is either a separate house, or a suite of apartments (consisting of a room in which to sleep and pass the day, a kitchen, and a latrine) that are, or may be made, separate and shut out from any other apartments in the same house;" *Manners*, 185.

[82] Hanna, "Cuisine," 406.

one of the rooms, was often badly described and is particularly difficult to identify in the architectural context.

Hanna's observations allow us to make a cautious conjecture regarding the pre-Ottoman epoch: it is quite probable that a similar kind of recess, devoid of an oven and a ventilation system, was used as kitchen in at least some of the modest houses and apartments belonging to the medieval Cairene middle-class. The need for such an annex becomes more evident when we consider the fact that some people prepared their meals (or bread dough) at home in order to cook or bake them in the public oven.[83] To have a meal or dough made this way, a niche, or recess, would suffice. Besides, this kind of place was also very handy to unpack one's shopping and reload the takeaway food from the boxes or pots in which they were carried home into the bowls in which they were served. As a simple recess, it might not have been specified as "kitchen" in the *waqf* documents.[84]

If this kind of annex indeed existed in any of the middle-class apartments or houses, it seems that because of the high degree of smoke emission it was not possible to use any kind of movable *kānūn*, or a brazier, in it. In the post-Fatimid Cairo, such a *kānūn*[85] could be of two kinds. One could resemble the only surviving Mamluk brazier, which is made of cast bronze inlaid with silver and measures 35.2 centimeters (height) × 39.4 centimeters (width) × 34.9 centimeters (diameter), and which is currently in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.[86] The other kind of portable *kānūn* could be similar to contemporary North African *meshwar*, an ordinary, two-chambered oven made of red pottery. In its upper chamber a pot or small grills were placed; in the lower chamber embers would glow. This kind of brazier was relatively widely used in Andalusian Murcia (where it is known as *anafe*) for cooking or warming food at home. One relatively well preserved (but still very fragmentary) Egyptian piece resembling such a device was excavated by Polish archeologists in Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria. Of the remaining medieval items one was found in Qsar es-Seghir, Algeria, while others (25 items),

[83] See below, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares and market control," p. 115.

[84] As a matter of fact, such a recess or niche can be the only justification of Revault's statement about kitchens being located in antechambers of the living units of the *rabʿ* complex (Revault, "Architecture," 140; cf. above, p. 92, n. 78). Otherwise, any assertion about kitchens as parts of the *rabʿ* units should be treated with caution; see above, n. 78.

[85] See above, p. 92, where an example of a Fatimid-era food warmer is mentioned.

[86] It dates back to second half of the seventh/thirteenth century; see, for example, Charles K. Wilkinson, "Heating and Cooking in Nishapur," *The Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* (June 1944): 287.

dating back to the seventh/thirteenth century, were discovered in Murcia, Spain.[87] If such a device was used at home at all—either to cook or to keep a dish warm—it could only be in the courtyard, on the roof or in a well-ventilated room.[88]

The existence of such a hearthless kitchen annex in houses and apartments of the medieval Cairene middle-class is only a hypothetical proposition. Nevertheless, it might be a convenient explanation behind those of the Geniza records which made Goitein observe that a kitchen was "a common fixture" in al-Fusṭāṭ[89] and on the other hand, that there was "not much cooking" in the houses of al-Fusṭāṭ or that "warm food was often brought home from the bazaar."[90] Could it be that the "kitchen" that Goitein claims to have been present in almost every house in al-Fusṭāṭ was, in some cases at least, a space resembling a niche or recess used exclusively for storage and preparation of food that was to be carried to the street oven?

Felix Fabri, the German Dominican friar who visited Cairo in 1483 and who was apparently more inquisitive than other Westerners, pursued the matter further than simply stating that the Cairenes did not light the fire

[87] For the description of the Spanish device see Julio Navarro Palazón, Alfonso Robles, "Le mobilier céramique," in *Une maison musulmane à Murcie. L'Andalousie arabe au quotidian. Exposition de l'IMA 30 avril–27 octobre 1991*, ed. Musée de l'Institut du Monde Arabe, 27–57. See also the photograph in Mariane Barrucand and Achim Bednorz, *Moorish Architecture in Andalusia* (Köln: Taschen, 1992), 150. For the discussion on relation between the *tannūr* and *anafe* and the Arabic derivation of the latter term see Guillermo Rosselló-Bordoy, "Arqueología e información textual: el utillaje en la cocina andalusí," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 51–2. Cf. also Charles Redman, *Qsar es-Seghir. An Archeological View of Medieval Life* (Orlando, Flor.: Academic Press Inc., 1986), 113–14. For remarks on *kānūn* as used in the medieval Baghdadi cuisine see Nasrallah, *Annals*, 36–7.

[88] It should probably be indicated that there is a meaningful difference between keeping a dish warm, that is leaving it on a slow fire for a length of time, and reheating a dish, or cooking it again. It seems that unlike the keeping a dish warm, which was a regular procedure in the Arabic-Islamic kitchen, warming up the cooled-down food was an unwelcome practice. In his anthology of Arabic literature, Shihāb ad-Dīn al-Ibshīhī quotes a saying which in fact disqualifies the warmed-up food as a meal: "Food which was warmed up twice is spoiled;" al-Ibshīhī, *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann: Mustaẓraf* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-ʿArabiyya n.d.), 177. For the detrimental aspects related to reheated food see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 167; cf. also Ibn Bassām's comment on warming up fried fish in Ibn Bassām *Nihāya*, 57. In his discussion of the cuisine of the Abbasid Baghdad, David Waines suggests that dishes for picnics, "prepared in advance and transported in containers, could be reheated over a portable brazier;" Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 13. Judging upon ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī's description of *raghīf aṣ-ṣīniyya*, however, the Egyptian/Cairene elites preferred their picnic food to be kept warm in thermos-like containers rather than reheated over the fire; see al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 195–7 (fols. 48*l*-49*r*).

[89] Goitein, "Urban Housing," 10.

[90] Ibid., 10; idem, *Daily Life*, 141.

at home. In an attempt to analyze and comment on this situation, he gave three reasons for which the majority of the city's population did not cook at home. The first of them was, as he put it, high quality of the street food. Since the street kitchens in Cairo were constantly busy and, at the same time, it was obvious for him that nobody would make purchases at the place where food was not cooked properly, Fabri logically concluded that the food they served must have been good. The second reason had to do with the deep contempt in which the Egyptians kept their women. The local men, Fabri wrote, "were absolutely not able to eat anything that woman cooked or prepared. That was why no woman dared to approach the fire on which the food was being cooked; that was also why one could never notice a woman preparing meat dumplings or a soup for the baby."[91] And, since it would be impossible to prevent women from participating in home cooking, the food was not prepared at home at all. The third reason was the scarcity of forests in the Orient and, consequently, high price of wood, which was so costly that it was sold by weight. "If, then, food was to be cooked in every Cairene house, as we do in our country," he wrote, "all the forests of the Orient would not be enough to satisfy the needs of this one city."[92]

The first two of Fabri's statements remain open for discussion, for neither his opinion concerning the quality of the street food nor his explanation regarding women being kept away from kitchen and cooking, are unequivocally true.[93] However, the last of his reasons—also observed by a number of other travelers—seems to be well-taken.[94] Quality wood, highly priced and in short supply, was in fact a serious problem in Egypt, which since antiquity had to rely, though not entirely, on deliveries from abroad. In the Middle Ages, the majority of wood, apparently both in the form of raw material and ready made products such as furniture, came to Egypt from Europe and, to a lesser extend, from India.[95] However, the

[91] Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 568.

[92] Ibid., 568.

[93] For the discussion on the quality of ready-made food as sold in the streets of Cairo see below, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares, and market control." As for Fabri's opinion regarding women and cooking see below, chapter I.4. "The Cairene cook," p. 120.

[94] On the scarcity of timber see also, for example, Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 24; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109; Trevisan, *Voyage*, 209; von Bretten, *Voyages*, 60; Gilles Fermanel, in Vincent Stochove, Gilles Fermanel and Robert Fauvel, *Voyage en Egypte. Vincent Stochove, Gilles Fermanel, Robert Fauvel, 1631*, ed. Baudouin van de Walle (Le Caire: IFAO, 1975), 99; Wild, *Voyages*, 92, 183.

[95] See Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 46, 211; also Maurice Lombard, *Espaces et réseaux du haut Moyen Age* (Paris et La Hale: Mouton, 1972), 132 and 148, n. 165; David Jacoby, "The

Fatimids and the Ayyubids, prompted by the necessity to upkeep Egypt's Mediterranean, Red Sea, and Nile River fleets, also took steps to secure local sources of wood and, consequently, placed the trees of native *sanṭ*, or *Acacia nilotica*, under special government control. As the main motive behind the decision was the need to obtain quality wood for shipbuilding, the directives provided that any piece of wood suitable for this purpose could not be cut.[96]

But the solid and expensive[97] timber of *sanṭ*, apart from being suitable for shipbuilding, was also a very efficient combustible.[98] Therefore, the groves' workers were allowed to cut its twigs and little branches which could be used as firewood. Such twigs, sold to merchants for 4 dinars per 100 loads,[99] were transported by Nile boats from Bahnasā, Safṭ Rashīn, Ashmunayn, Asyūṭ, Akhmīm, and Qūṣ[100] to the river port in al-Fusṭāṭ.[101] Customarily, part of the firewood was reserved for the sultan's agencies.[102] It is difficult to ascertain who, apart from the sultan and his men, used acacia twigs as firewood. Considering its price, which must have been higher than that paid by the merchants in Upper Egypt, and the relatively limited deliveries, it could not have been a combustible used too commonly.

Be it as it may, with time the administrative control was abandoned and, as al-Maqrīzī has it, some people "put their hands on these trees,"[103] and acacias, once "innumerable," were all cut. This must have happened at some point during the Mamluk era, either not long before or during

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Supply of War Materials to Egypt in the Crusader Period," *JSAI* 25 (2001): 102–32; repr. in David Jacoby, *Commercial Exchange across the Mediterranean: Byzantium, the Crusader Levant, Egypt and Italy* (Aldershot: Variorum Reprints 2005), no. II.

96 Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn ad-Dawāwīn*, Russian trans. in Ибн Маммати, *Правила диванов* (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 108–9; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 110–11.

97 According to al-Maqrīzī, the price of a single acacia log could reach 100 dinars; the cutting itself was also taxed, with the tax equal a dinar per 100 loads; *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 110, 111.

98 Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 73 (fol. 18*r*); al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 28.

99 According to Walther Hinz, *Islamische Masse und Gewichte* (Leiden/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1970), 13, a load, or *ḥiml*, of linen and brazilwood equaled in Egypt 600 *raṭls*, or 270 kilograms. This, however, seems to refer to Mamluk times, while the regulations in question date back to Fatimid and Ayyubid epochs; cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 56; William Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans 1382–1468 A.D. Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrī Birdī's Chronicles of Egypt,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), II, 39. According to Lombard, a load (*ḥamla*) equaled ca. 75 kilograms; Lombard, *Espaces*, 148, n. 160.

100 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 110; II, 194.

101 Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn ad-Dawāwīn* (*Правила диванов*), 109; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 111.

102 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 111.

103 Ibid., 111.

al-Maqrīzī's lifetime (766–845/1364–1442) for, according to his account, the ex-Fatimid and Ayyubid *sanṭ* woodlands were still exploited under the Mamluks. The trees which were cut there were transported to the port in al-Fusṭāṭ, where part of the wood was used for building ships, and part was stoked as firewood in the ovens of the sultan's sugar refineries (al-*maṭābikh as-sulṭāniyya*),[104] of which there were almost seventy in al-Fusṭāṭ alone in the early eighth/fourteenth century.[105] We do not know exactly what period al-Maqrīzī's report refers to. However ineffective the naval activity of the Mamluks,[106] it seems that their disordered exploitation of the woodlands contributed to the deforestation of Egyptian acacia groves.[107] This may mean, in turn, that when Felix Fabri and other Western visitors made their observations on the scarcity and high price of wood in Egypt, *Acacia nilotica* was already not only scarce and costly but also on the verge of extinction, if not already extinct. Medieval Egyptian shipyards consumed the acacia woodland reserves as effectively as the construction of the Armada destroyed trees in large parts of Spain the 1580's. Today, large natural stands of trees are still absent from Egypt.

Apart from *sanṭ*, there grew in Egypt another kind of tree of which good usable timber could be produced. The species, known as *labakh* (*Albizzia lebbeck Benth*) was, however, very rare in the Nile valley.[108] There were also sycamore trees (*Ficus sycomorus* L.) which, cultivated by the Egyptians from antiquity, were big "like old walnut trees"[109] and plentiful here in the Middle Ages. Sycamores were doubly precious: they yielded rich crops of delightful figs (*jummayz*) while their durable and elements-proof wood was used in the construction of houses, gates, doors, and other coarse

[104] Ibid., 272.

[105] On sugar production in medieval Egypt see below, chapter II.9. *B. Sweetening agents*, pp. 299–302.

[106] According to al-Maqrīzī, the first Mamluk sultan to show an interest in the war at sea was aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars who, having decided to restore the old glory of the Egyptian fleet and to build new ships, ordered to cut trees (*Khiṭaṭ*, II, 194). For discussion on shipbuilding activities of the sultans who followed Baybars see Albrecht Fuess, "Rotting Ships and Razed Harbors: The Naval Policy of the Mamluks," *MSR* 5 (2001): 45–71. However, except probably for the commander in chief Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī, who in 1366 built ships of wood coming from Lebanon, and for the ships built from 1507 in Suez, for which Ottoman wood was used, the article does not deal with the origins of lumber used for building ships by the Mamluks. For a detailed study on the Egyptian import of timber see Jacoby, "Supply of War Materials," *passim*.

[107] Cf. also al-Maqrīzī's information on the row of *sanṭ* trees growing along the road near Qanāṭir al-Iwazz that were cut in 790/1387; *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 148.

[108] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 35 (fol. 8*l*); Lombard, *Espaces*, 130.

[109] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 37 (fol. 9*r*).

articles.[110] One would rather not cut them for fuel. The same probably refers to other fruit trees which were cultivated in Egypt, although their offshoots, seasonally pruned,[111] must have been used by the country people as firewood. Finally, there grew date palms which, not surprisingly, were very common in the Nile valley. As date palm wood, otherwise not too durable, was traditionally used for rafters, dhows, and other constructions which required long straight posts, the logs themselves were probably not cut into pieces to be used as fuel.

All in all, firewood was apparently not abundant in the Nile valley; it seems that whoever wanted to enjoy burning wood for fuel, had to make do with twigs, which could still be costly, and with leftovers from the shipyards and carpenters' workshops that were probably not for free, either. It is possible that such circumstances induced the majority of the population to give up cooking at home.[112] The unavailability of firewood should not be considered the sole factor determining the rise and development of the urban street kitchens, yet access to wood was important. Other combustibles were available—sun-dried camel's, horse's or buffalo's dung, dried palm leaves and stalks, and bark or chaff[113]—but none of them could be comfortably used at home, particularly in the dense and multistoried urban architecture which was typical for downtown Cairo,[114] and in the

[110] Ibid., 39 (fol. 9*l*).

[111] See Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn ad-Dawāwīn* (*Правила диванов*), 80; for more details on Egyptian fruit trees see below, chapter II.7. "Fruits," pp. 266–8.

[112] As far as the shortage of fuel and the absence of kitchens in apartments are concerned, Cairo was by no means an exception in the Mediterranean. According to Simone Sigoli this was also the reason why the Damascenes did not cook at home; Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 183. See also Nelly Hanna's references to the insignificant quantity of kitchens in the residences of Aleppo; Hanna, *Habiter au Caire*, 142. Reinhold von Lubenau, who visited Constantinople in the second half of the sixteenth century, noticed that in thousands of city houses "fires were never lit from one year to the next and that nobody cooked food at home because of the price of wood. People found it cheaper to eat in taverns" (which had replaced the ancient Roman *popina* and the Byzantine *kapeleion*. These taverns offered mostly pulses and vegetables, cooked and kept simmering in the pot with water and oil which resulted in a kind of soup. Such a dish could be followed by pieces of lamb or pork cooked on a spit); see Kislinger, "Christians of the East," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 198.

[113] See, for example, Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 24; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109; Trevisan, *Voyage*, 209; von Bretten, *Voyages*, 60; Fermanel, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 99; Sommer, *Voyages*, 296–7; Wild, *Voyages*, 92, 183. Cf. Ibn al-Ḥājj's discussion over the permissibility of using animals' excrements as combustible according to various legal schools of Islam; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 167.

[114] For more details on the residential architecture of al-Fusṭāṭ and al-Qāhira see above, "Introductory Essay: Medieval Cairo and its Inhabitants," pp. 21–2.

climate in which the inconvenience of smoke and heat is particularly bothersome.

The hypothesized scarcity of regular kitchens with cooking facilities in Cairene apartments had numerous implications for both the process of the Cairene "culinary revolution," and the process of making the city the culinary capital of the medieval world. Firstly, it significantly contributed to the fact that hundreds of street kitchens, food stands, and peddling cooks could spread all over the city and serve ready-made food night and day. Secondly, the practice of cooking, freed from the usual private territory and domestic domain, became a part of public urban daily life and of the city's socio-cultural space. Thirdly, the city culinary culture became particularly receptive to new preparations, whatever they were and wherever they originated, while the demand was high enough to welcome any enterprising initiative in the food business. And finally, the street cuisine was extremely diversified, both in the kind of dishes and in their price and quality; this, in turn, gave the city's inhabitants a possibility of assessment and choice.

B. *Food Producers, their Wares, and Market Control*

Relying on the services offered by street cooks was not unique to medieval Cairenes. The inhabitants of at least some Anadalusian, Iraqi, and Syrian towns also consumed food prepared in street kitchens or public ovens. However, there was a considerable difference in proportions between metropolitan Cairo and provincial centers of the Arabic-Islamic world. Damascus, for example, which was the second largest Near Eastern city after Cairo, was not large. The fact that the population estimates for Damascus ranged from 50,000 to 90,000 may mean that the local street cooks, present "throughout the whole city" in "several places,"[115] were indeed noticeable and relatively numerous. In Cairo, whose estimated population ranged from 600,000 to 200,000, there were so many places where ready-made food was being sold night and day, that foreign visitors were stunned. The number of street cooks in the city was sometimes said

[115] Gucci, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 143; see also Sigoli, in ibid., 183.

to reach ten,[116] twelve,[117] or twenty thousand.[118] The twelve thousand figure, however, cannot be considered a real estimate here, as it was used with reference to medieval Cairo on various occasions in an apparently mythical way: according to al-Maqrīzī's informants there were twelve thousand shops in al-Qaṣaba,[119] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa wrote about twelve thousand water carriers,[120] Johann Schiltberger reported of twelve thousand streets in the city and twelve thousand houses standing on each of them.[121] Arnold von Harff multiplied this figure. Cairo's 24,000 lanes that are mentioned in his account had direct impact on the number of cooks: "a cook and two bread bakers are provided for each street, so that there are in the town 24,000 cooks and 48,000 bread bakers." He also gave some additional data: "Although there are many streets without cooks or bakers, there are countless alleys with a hundred or a hundred-fifty cooks."[122]

Leo Africanus's calculation seems to provide more reliable data: by his account there were about sixty kitchens serving boiled meat from tin vessels in Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area.[123] True enough, he speaks of the busiest artery and trading place in the city, yet sixty stands serving meat along a stretch no longer than half a kilometer is still a lot. But it is not impossible: al-Maqrīzī remembered times when, after the afternoon prayer, the bird-meat fryers used to sell their goods while sitting in a row that had stretched all the way from al-Kāmil's madrasa to the door of madrasa of an-Nāṣir.[124] The culinary center of medieval Cairo occupied much more territory than was covered by the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square itself. Located along the main street of the former Fatimid city, the two-kilometer artery

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[116] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas his Pilgrimes* (James MacLehose and Sons, 1905), 653, mentioned in von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109, n. 2.

[117] Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 568; von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya*, 65–6. The same number was also mentioned by J. Tucher in Rieter, *Das Reisebuch der Familie Rieter*, ed. R. Röhricht and H. Meisner (Stuttgart Litt. Verein, 1884), 117 (quoted in von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109, n. 2).

[118] Radziwiłł, *Perygrynacja*, 91.

[119] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 95.

[120] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Hādī at-Tazī (Rabat: Maṭbūʿāt Akādīmīya al-Mamlaka al-Maghribīya, 1997), I, 203.

[121] Johann Schiltberger, *The Bondage and Travels of Johann Schliltberger, a Native of Bavaria, in Europe, Asia and Africa, 1396–1427* (repr. New York: Burt Franklin Publisher, 1970), 50–1.

[122] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109.

[123] L'Africain, *Description*, 504. According to Frescobaldi, the cauldrons were made of copper; Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49. Actually, the vessels were most probably made of tin-coated copper (copper itself was apparently considered harmful, especially in combination with fatty and fried foods; cf. Marín, "Pots and Fire," 289–302.

[124] Which had to take place before 1384–86 or before aẓ-Ẓāhir Barqūq built his madrasa in the area; see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 29.

of shops, workshops, mosques, caravanserais, etc., ran all the way from the gate of Bāb al-Futūḥ in the north to the gate of Bāb Zuwayla in the south. The street cooks, with hundreds of shops and stands serving fried, boiled, and roasted dishes, were spread all over the area. A warm meal or snack could be bought night and day anywhere—be it in the neighborhood of Bāb Zuwayla, a place occupied by confectioners,[125] or by Bāb al-Futūḥ, inside which stands of butchers, grain dealers, and green-grocers were located. Street kitchens and food stands could also be found, though with lesser density, all over the city.

Apart from food stands and street kitchens which used more or less regular ovens,[126] there existed in Cairo a network of peddling restaurants.

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[125] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100.

[126] Generally, street ovens were of two kinds, the regular *furn* oven and the bee-hive shaped *tannūr*-type oven. Some contemporary scholars tend to define *furn* as a communal, and *tannūr* as a domestic device (see, for example, *EI*[2], V, "Khubz" by Ch. Pellat; Marín, "Pots and Fire," 294–5; *EI*[2], X, "Ṭabkh" by D. Waines; idem, "Cereals, Bread and Society: An Essay on the Staff of Life in Medieval Iraq," pt. I, *JESHO* 30 (February 1987): 280; Rosselló-Bordoy, "Arqueología e información textual," 51–2, 66. See also Nasrallah, *Annals*, 39. Actually, as far as medieval Cairo is concerned, both types of ovens were used by street cooks, as in both of them food, and not only bread, could be baked or cooked (although not all the dishes could be baked in either of these ovens). However, it was near the *furn*, and not near the *tannūr*, where "female slaves, women, girls, boys, men and slaves" gathered to use the occasion to intermingle and enjoy "idle talking" (Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 170). Although the *tannūr*, an oven of Mesopotamian origin, is still widespread in the rural areas of the Middle East, it now disappeared from Egypt where it was used from antiquity (for bread baking) until at least the nineteenth century.

As far as regular street kitchens are concerned, particularly those serving boiled food, they must have used the *kānūn*-type of oven or a "cooker" made of mud and bricks and similar to those pictured on various illustrations from medieval Iraq, such as the one featuring apothecaries in a Baghdad pharmacy (*De materia medica of Dioscoride*, New York Metropolitan Museum, Legs Cora Timken Burnett, No. 57.51.21, repr. in Richard Ettinghausen, *La Peinture Arabe* /Genève: Skira, 1962/, 87; and St. Louis City Art Museum No. 179.55, repr. in Oleg Grabar, *The Mediation of Ornament* /Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992/, 82) or the one featuring the street cooks (al-Wāsiṭī's illustrations to *Maqāmāt*, Forty-fourth *Maqāma*, Schefer, Bibliotheque Nationale, arabe 5847, f. 140r, repr. and descr. in Shirley Guthrie, *Arab Social Life in the Middle Ages: An Illustrated Study*/ London: Saqi Books, 1995/, 194–95, pl. 20; Biancamaria S. Amoretti, *Un altro Medioevo. Il quotidiano nell'Islam dal VII al XIII secolo* /Roma: Editori Laterza, 2001/, tav. 12. Similar oven was painted by an unknown Syrian /?/ artist who illustrated "Abū Zayd and other guests enjoying hospitality on a winter's night" in *Maqāmāt* or *Seances of al-Harīrī*, c. 1300, British Library, Add. 22114, fol. 155r, in Duncan Haldane, *Mamluk Painting* /Warminster: Aris & Philips Ltd., 1978/, pl. 30; Guthrie, *Social Life*, 191, pl. 19).

For *kānūn* see also above, chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," pp. 91, 93–4. For discussion and description of *tannūr* see, for example, *EI*[2], V, "Khubz" by Ch. Pellat; *EI*[2], VI, "Maṭbakh" (1. In the mediaeval caliphate) by D. Waines; idem, "Cereals," 255–85. For discussion on both *furn* and *tannūr* see al-Isrā'ilī, *Aghdhiya*, 197–202; Reinhard Mielck, *Terminologie und Technologie der Müller und Bäcker im islamischen Mittelalter* (Glückstadt und Hamburg: J.J. Augustin, 1913), 53–65.

As Bernhard von Breydenbach, a prelate of Meinz, observed at the end of the fifteenth century, "quite a number of cooks ... walk through the city streets with their kitchens, carrying and displaying fire or boiling water or roasting grills etc. on their heads."[127] From peddling cooks one could buy a variety of foods, including roasted meats, "boiled fowls, peas, and other boiled things"[128] as well as fried fish or a milk dish. Upon being approached by a customer, the cook took the oven off his head and put it on a tripod. While wandering about the streets of Cairo, the peddling cooks shouted the names of the dishes they were carrying. Some pedestrians approached them and bought the food when passing by, but a lot of customers waited for cooks at home, looking through the window; if they spotted a dish that suited them, they called the peddler and bought what he was offering.[129]

Because of the constant and common demand, the offer of public kitchens was fairly rich and assorted enough to satisfy the varying tastes and financial capabilities of customers. The food was also of a rather diverse quality. In Cairo, as in other medieval Islamic cities, there existed no municipal authorities or guilds that would supervise professional activities of food dealers or cooks.[130] The institution which undertook this function in Islam was the office of the *muḥtasib*, a state official who, while in charge of inspecting various domains of city life, was also responsible for

[127] Von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya*, 66. Such ovens were also noted by Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 569; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109; Tafur, *Travels*, 100; Harant, *Voyage*, 212; Purchas, *Pilgrimage*, 653, quoting Baumgarten, mentioned in von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109, n. 2. It is unclear whether the "little oven" as mentioned by von Bretten was portable or fixed: "There is a lot of canteens (*gargotes*) which sell both fried/cooked and roasted food, partly in the establishments, and partly in the streets where they offer, on little ovens, pieces of meat roasted on little spikes;" von Bretten, *Voyages*, 62. The instrument that the Cairo peddling cooks carried on their heads was, most probably, similar to, or identical with, portable *kānūn*, or two-chambered oven made of red pottery; for more details see above, chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," pp. 94–5, and n. 87.

[128] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109. Cf. the account by Gucci who, in his description of the Damascene peddling cooks, reports that "those who go about selling the said things carry a table on IV legs on their heads; on it is a fire-place with a pan, all the while aboiling; and on it is the meat, a bowl, a small ladle, the water and the salt and everything necessary;" Gucci, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 143.

[129] Fabri, *Voyage*, 109.

[130] For discussion of guilds in medieval Middle Eastern cities see, for example, Gabriel Baer, "Guilds in the Middle Eastern History," in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M.A. Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 11–30; Claude Cahen, "Y a-t-il eu des corporations professionnelles dans le monde musulman classique?," in Hourani and Stern, *Islamic City*, 51–63; S.M. Stern, "The Constitution of the Islamic City," in ibid., 25–50; Ira M. Lapidus, "Muslim Urban Society in Mamlūk Syria," in ibid., 195–205; S.D. Goitein, "Cairo: An Islamic City in the Light of the Geniza Documents," in *Middle Eastern Cities*, ed. Ira M. Lapidus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 80–96.

the proper functioning of the bazaar kitchens. Though employed by the state, he was guided by the religious law and not by the ruler's orders. Based in the Qur᾽anic rule of "ordering good and forbidding evil,"[131] the *muḥtasib* had in fact almost no limitations to his function of controlling society. The beat of the Cairo *muḥtasib* was extremely vast (during the Fatimid era it covered the areas of al-Fusṭāṭ, al-Qāhira, and of the Rawḍa island; in the Mamluk period the Cairene *muḥtasib* had authority over all of the Lower Egypt apart from Alexandria),[132] and so was the scope of his activity.

Overburdened with duties, and generally with little knowledge of what he was searching for, the *muḥtasib* did not walk through the markets everyday or visit every shop. To be able to do the job at all, he had to make use of the services of a whole network of assistants, ranging from ordinary spies and informers to professionals (*ʿarīf*)[133] who on his behalf controlled the processes of bread production and sausage-making, the degree of hygiene observed by street cooks, and the work of the confectionaries.[134]

The food industry of medieval Cairo employed thousands of persons whose professions ranged from owners of large enterprises, such as rich spice merchants and grain dealers, to the army of petty street cooks and baker's and butcher's boys. Egyptian *ḥisba* handbooks, or sets of instructions that were meant to help the *muḥtasib* in detecting various corrupt practices, usually discuss about twenty of the most important professions linked to food production.[135] They include: 1. grain dealers and millers (*ḥubūbiyyūn* and *daqqāqūn*/*ṭaḥḥānūn*); 2. bakers (*khabbāzūn*); 3. public oven owners (*farrānūn*); 4. *zulābiyya* producers (*zulbāniyyūn*; *zulābiyya* was a kind of deep-fried cakes with honey and almonds); 5. butchers (*qaṣṣābūn*/*jazzārūn*); 6. sellers of cooked livers (*kubūdiyyūn*); 7. sellers of cold snacks (*bawārdiyyūn*), 8. sellers of boiled meat (*sharāʾiḥiyyun*);[136] 9. sellers of roast

[131] Qur᾽an, 3:110; 9:71; 22:41.

[132] In the Mamluk epoch, all of Egypt was under the authority of three *muḥtasib*s: apart from the Cairo *muḥtasib*, there was one who controlled Alexandria and the other who controlled al-Fusṭāṭ and the Upper Egypt; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 37; Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 10.

[133] Adel Allouche translates this name—somewhat misleadingly—as "master", which may wrongly suggest that *ʿarīf* was in fact a guild's head; Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 33.

[134] Buckley, "*Muḥtasib*," 111–17; idem, *Market Inspector*, 23.

[135] For a brief presentation of the Egyptian *ḥisba* handbooks see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 2. "*Ḥisba* manuals," pp. 40–1.

[136] Maya Shatzmiller defines the *sharāʿiḥī* as "butcher, seller of sliced meat, pickled meat seller" or "meat merchant;" Maya Shatzmiller, *Labour in the Medieval Islamic World* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 109, 136. Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's and Ibn al-Ḥājj's descriptions of this

meat (*shawwāʾūn*); 10. sellers of sheep's heads (*rawwāsūn*); 11. sellers of fried fish (*qallāʾū as-samak*); 12. sellers of small salted fish (*bāʿat aṣ-ṣīr wa-l-būrī*); 13. cooks (*ṭabbākhūn*); 14. *harīsa* producers (*harāʾisiyyūn*; *harīsa* was a thick meal of meat minced with wheat); 15. sausage producers (*naqāniqiyyūn*; *naqāniq* were sausages made of minced meat, spices, and onions); 16. confectioners (*ḥilwāniyyūn*); 17. syrup producers (*sharābiyyūn*); 18. sellers of clarified butter (*sammānūn*); 19. sellers of dairy products and sour milk dealers (*labbānūn*); 20. producers of sesame oil and olive oil (*muʿāṣirū ash-shirj wa-z-zayt*); 21. sellers of cooked lentils (*maṭbūkh al-ʿads*); 22. sellers of cooked broad beans (*bāqillāniyyūn / fawwālūn*).[137]

Obviously enough, the handbooks do not enumerate all the fields of culinary production or services that were offered to Cairenes[138] or discuss all the possible abuses practiced in the industry. Those absent from the list were to be treated in a similar way to the examples included in the list.[139] Besides, as one of the authors makes us understand, there was a danger that "writing on all those countless methods of cheating" could

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professional's activities clearly show him as a man who cooks and sells the meat and who, moreover, also cooks the products which people bring to him; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 175); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 186–90. Cf. "boiled meat" shops noticed by Roman authors in ancient Egypt; Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, I, 150.

137 The number of professions mentioned in particular manuals varies; as for Egyptian authors, Ibn Bassām names the highest number of them. The amount of professions mentioned in the Spanish *ḥisba* manuals is much lower; see, for example, the manuals by ʿAbd ar-Raʾūf (where the discussed professions include twelve categories: shopkeepers, bakers, oven owners, fig sellers, milk dealers, butchers, cooks, fish sellers, fried fish sellers, cheese sellers, *harīsa* sellers, and oil and honey sellers) or by Ibn ʿAbdūn (where all the questions concerning the food industry are limited to the chapter "On weights and measures"), in *Documents Arabes inédits sur la vie sociale et économique en Occident musulman au Moyen Âge. Trois traités hispaniques de ḥisba* (*Texte arabe*) ed. Evariste Lévi-Provençal (Le Caire: IFAO, 1955). The *ḥisba* treaty written in India does not deal with the control of food trade and production at all (*Kitāb Niṣāb al-Iḥtisāb* by as-Sunāmī, Engl. trans. in M. Izzi Dien, *The Theory and Practice of Market Law in Medieval Islam. A Study of Kitāb Niṣāb al-Iḥtisāb of ʿUmar b. Muḥammad al-Sunāmī* (*7th–8th/13th–14th Century*) /Warminster: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1997/); Ibn al-Mubarrad ad-Dimashqī's treatment of particular professions mentioned in his "Kitāb al-Ḥisba" is limited to one- or two-word commentary for each of the professions; ed. by Ḥabīb Zayyāt, *Al-Machriq* 35 (1937): 384–390. The short treaty published in French by Charles Pellat, "Un 'Traité' de *ḥisba* signé: Saladin," in *Studi in onore di Francesco Gabrieli nel suo ottantesimo compleano*, ed. Renato Traini (Roma: Università di Roma, 1984), II, 593–98, does not list professions at all.

138 The most popular foods of those ignored in the *ḥisba* books included fried fowl (pigeons, geese, and particularly chicken, produced in large quantities by the famous Cairo incubators), pancakes, fried cheese and fried eggs, sweet chicken meat, and rice desserts. See also Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 114–15, where professions such as *kaʿkī* ("cake master"), *khamīrī* ("pastry cook"), *kāmukhī*, or seller of appetizers, *lawwāz*, almond dealer, etc. are mentioned.

139 Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 118 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 135).

"give clues to those who have not possessed a knowledge of them yet,"[140] so it was better not to mention them. It is hard to say if such measures had any influence on preventing corrupt practices such as purposely cheating naïve customers or carelessly ignoring the basic rules of hygiene. However, *ḥisba* books imply that it was not uncommon among the Cairo food producers and shopkeepers to violate the Islamic law by harming their fellow Muslims.

In their treatment of individual branches of the food industry, most of the *ḥisba* handbooks usually give priority to the professions that deal with grain trade and bread production. In medieval Egypt, the bread was not only the staff of life; in the country depending on moods of the inundating river it also had a strategic value. It was, therefore, an object of particular concern for the rulers, who had to secure its constant supply in both the market and the royal granaries and who had to deal with an immediate, and most often violent, public discontent if any irregularity adversely affected, or could affect, the population's access to bread.[141]

Since it was the *muḥtasib* whom the state blamed, and sometimes punished, for any anomalies in bread distribution (such as the rise of its price or disappearance from the market), no wonder that it was the grain brokers, millers, and bakers who became an object of the *muḥtasib*'s particular attention. Besides, it was also this area that offered the best opportunity to display his talents, to show off in front of both his royal employer and society. This strategic importance of bread, together with the fact that the merchandise offered various possibilities of manipulation, put persons involved in bread production in a hazardous position. The inevitability of control and high penalty was apparently much more probable in this branch of the food industry than in any other business. In fact, the majority of records referring to the levying of penalties on fraudulent food dealers concern grain dealers, millers, and bakers. For example, in the chronicle of al-Musabbiḥī that dates back to the Fatimid period, seven instances of punishment inflicted upon dishonest entrepreneurs are mentioned. Of this number, only one (concerning a sweet-maker whom

[140] Ibid., 34 (58).

[141] On bread in the politics of the Mamluk Sultanate see Boaz Shoshan, "Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1350–1517," *JIH* 10 (1980): 459–78; idem, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 58–66; Lev, "Regime," 150–61; Ira M. Lapidus, "The Grain Economy of Mamluk Egypt," *JESHO* 12 (1969): 1–15; idem, *Muslim Cities*, 51–5. On the grain trade and bread production in the Fatimid Egypt see Lev, *State*, 162–78; also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 234–53.

the *muḥtasib* beat and pilloried for cheating on weight in Dhū al-ḥijja 415/1024–5) involved a person whose profession was not connected with the bread production. All the remaining cases (two in Rajab 414/1023–4 and four in Dhū al-qaʿda 415/1024–5) concerned professions within the bread industry.[142]

The *muḥtasib*'s care for bread started at the grain merchant's (*al-ḥubūbī*) who could occasionally cheat on the weight, mix fresh grain with the old that remained unsold from the previous year, or mix good grain with the bad and sell the blend as good.[143] The list of wrongs and corrupt practices that could occur in the process of bread production grew as it came to other branches of the business. Apparently, the *ḥisba* functionaries could not boast much success here: although the *muḥtasib* (or in fact his assistants) was supposed to make sure that the millers carefully sift the dust from grain,[144] that they always clean it of clay, grass, straw, and stones, it seems that all those objects could be found in Cairo bread.[145] Nor was

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[142] In Rajab 414 the *muḥtasib* beat and pilloried a number of bakers and flour dealers (*daqqāqūn*) in connection with the shortage of bread in the market. The same month a group of bakers was beaten and pilloried because of inflating prices. In Dhū al-qaʿda 415 the *muḥtasib* beat a group of bakers after he had found their scales giving short weight. Later the same month the *muḥtasib* summoned the brokers and carriers of wheat, beat some of them with the *dirra* whip (see below, p. 113, n. 172) and threatened them; see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 108 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 124); Buckley, "*Muḥtasib*," 108. Then a group of twenty two flour dealers were severely beaten by this functionary and paraded on camels through the streets of al-Fusṭāṭ which was a punishment for inflating prices, "blacking" the bread, or spoiling the flour by adding ground argil. Next day the *muḥtasib* beat another group of flour dealers and paraded them through the town; see al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 14, 15, 72, 74, 76. See also Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 124, n. 1; idem, "*Muḥtasib*," 108–9.

[143] The heaviest of his abuses, apparently considered an anti-state activity, was, however, hoarding the grain in order to sell it in the future at a higher profit.

[144] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 152. Ibn al-Ḥājj considered sifting of flour as an "innovation," for the reason that the *salaf* ("forefathers") did not use a sieve; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 157. Indeed, the Sunna is explicit about the fact that the sieves were not used by Muḥammad's companions. Particular *ḥadīths*, however, are not clear about the details: some say the barley was blown in order to separate the grain from the chaff, and the dough was made of what was left (*Sunan Ibn Mājah*, "Kitāb al-aṭʿima," *ḥadīth* 3326; *Sunan at-Tirmidhī*, "Kitāb az-Zuhd ʿan Rasūl Allah," *ḥadīth* 2287; *Musnad Aḥmad*, "Bāqī Musnad al-Anṣār," *ḥadīth* 21748). Others suggest that the barley was first ground and only then blown to separate it from the husks (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Kitāb al-aṭʿima," *ḥadīth* 4993). Nevertheless, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 152, stresses that the miller should not only sift the grain from dust and clean it from clay, but to have his flour sieve (*mankhūl ad-daqīq*) in good condition as well; the remaining *ḥisba* manuals do not mention the flour sieve at all.

[145] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 173. For the technical data referring to various kinds of mills used in the medieval Islamic world, as well as for the lexical analysis of the terminology relating to milling, see Mielck, *Terminologie*, 8–43.

it uncommon that millers mixed flour with ground chick peas or broad beans or, to improve the flour's look, added turmeric into it. Like many other entrepreneurs and shop attendants in other branches of the economy, they were clever in cheating on weights and measures. One wonders if this situation influenced, or was in any way linked to, the phenomenon depicted by Ibn al-Ḥājj, who reported with anger that "most of the Muslims do not see any difference between buying [flour] from the Muslim and buying from the infidels and, moreover, some of them prefer to make transactions with 'the people of the Book' than with their Muslim brothers."[146]

As for bakers and street oven owners, their abuses consisted mostly in ignoring the basic rules of hygiene that were supposed to constitute an important element of their work.[147] The regulations provided that they should wear a special kind of garment and a veil while preparing the dough so that sweat, saliva, or hair did not drop into it.[148] They should also brush the furnace regularly and wash the vessels used for making and storing the dough. If they worked during the daytime they should have by their side a man who would keep the flies away and remove ones that got into the dough. Not surprisingly, it seems that few cared about these matters and the control was not too effective, for insects and hair could also be found in the loaves of bread.[149] Another element that could worsen the bread quality was water: sometimes the bazaar bakers made the dough with water taken from salty wells and still added the usual portion of salt into the dough[150]—as they in fact should according to the regular recipe.[151] This double quantity of salt made the bread not only salty but bitter as

[146] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 164.

[147] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 154–55; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 22–4 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 47–9); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 21–4, 61–2; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 167–72; 172–75.

[148] The merits of this kind of protection were known to "some Greek gourmands" of antiquity who made workmen wear gloves and tie cloths over their mouths to prevent contamination of the dough by the sweat or breath; see Armand Ruffer, *Food in Egypt* (*Mémoires présentés a l'Institut d'Égypte, t. I*), (Le Caire: IFAO, 1919), 45.

[149] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 173.

[150] See Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 173. According to Ibn Riḍwān, the soil, and thus the well water within the Muqaṭṭam range and close to it, was boraxine and saline; see Ibn Riḍwān's "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 82–3, 107. Nāṣer-e Khosraw noticed that the closer the well was to the river, the sweeter the well water was; it became more brackish the further one got from the Nile; see *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 46.

[151] According to ash-Shayzarī, too small quantity of salt added to the dough made the bread "heavy both in weight and on the stomach;" see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 23 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 49).

well.[152] Besides, few cared for the cleanness of the water prepared for the dough. Some, apparently, even used it for ablutions.

Generally, employees of Cairo mills and bakeries seem to have been rather careless as far as hygiene was concerned. Some of them not only neglected washing hands before touching the dough, but also—as a trustworthy person observed—used to walk barefoot in the street or over the horses' excrements, or enter the toilet barefoot, and then go, without washing their feet, to thresh the wheat with them.[153] Some of the bakers burnt unclean combustible[154] in their ovens and others made the ovens dirty while trying to clean them up.[155] The *muḥtasib* was to inspect the bakeries and their employees every day,[156] but in all probability controls were not so frequent or regular. Judging by the textual evidence available today we may assume that Cairo bakeries were in fact inspected rather rarely and at random, that level of hygiene of the bakers did not meet official requirements, that customers were often cheated, and that generally the bread was of poor quality.[157]

Another product whose presence in the market was also important—though not so strategic—was meat and its products.[158] A range of professions engaged in this branch of food industry was very wide, from butchers and sausage-makers to street cooks specializing in preparing particular dishes. Again, the *muḥtasib*, whose work was to prevent them from abusing their fellow-Muslim customers and to punish those who did not observe the regulations, seems to have been almost powerless—one of the few records when a chronicler mentions a successful punishment inflicted upon a meat-meal producer is about a certain foreign (or Persian—*ʿajamī*)[159] cook who, in the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century, owned a street

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[152] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 172.

[153] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 157.

[154] On kinds of combustibles used in the Cairene ovens see also above, chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," pp. 96–100.

[155] The operation is described in detail by Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 167.

[156] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 21.

[157] On the quality of Cairene bread see also below, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 155–7.

[158] On meat in the medieval Middle Eastern diet see Ashtor, "Essay," *passim*.

[159] Literarily, the Arabic term *ʿajam* means people qualified by a confused and obscure way of speaking. Therefore, to the Arabs *ʿajam* are the non-Arabs, or the barbarians who speak no Arabic. In the Middle Ages, such barbarians were, for the Arabs, primarily their neighbors, the Persians. Although the affective value attributed to the word depended on the point of view of the user, the term *ʿajamī* most often referred to the race and culture of the Persians, with time becoming synonymous with Furs (Persians). See *EI*², I, "ʿAdjam" by F. Gabrieli.

kitchen near Qanāṭir as-Sibāʿ.[160] As a chronicler's account has it, one day the man decided to add to the meat pie called *sanbūsik*,[161] which he was cooking, meat of a black dog that he had fattened earlier on. The *muḥtasib*, who was immediately informed about it, flogged the swindler and chased him through the city with the dead dog tied with a rope to his neck. The foreign cook's companions were treated accordingly.[162]

The natural effect of the *ḥisba* office's ineffectiveness was that some of the butchers did not slaughter the animals according to the religious law,[163] while others were clever in planting the lean meat in place of the fat piece whose price the customer had just paid. Still others kept forgetting to properly display the meat they offered for sale, which means, for example, that lamb was mixed with goat and that neither of the kinds of meat was marked distinctly. It could even happen that somebody tried to sell the carcass of an animal which had not been slaughtered, but died naturally. Maybe that was why the Muslim customers sometimes chose to buy the meat in their Christian neighbor's shop rather that at their brother-in-religion butchery.[164]

The street cooks also could not refrain from trickery, especially so that it was particularly difficult to control them—if only because there were so many of them. The inspection of the roast lamb seller itself required exceptional effort: to make sure that the latter did not cheat the customers, the *muḥtasib* had to weigh the meat before it was put in the oven (*tannūr*) and put the numbers down in his pad. Then, after the lamb was done and pulled out of the oven, it was weighted again—and if its weight was over 2/3 of the raw meat weight, it meant that it was rare and had to go back to the oven. Moreover, the meat itself should be scrutinized carefully, since from time to time iron or plumb weighs were hidden inside it.[165] Apart from all this the *muḥtasib* should make sure that the street cooks did not add offal into the minced meat, that the goat meat was not cooked together with camel, lamb, or beef, that the ovens were clean and inlaid with fresh, clean clay, and that the vessels were washed with hot water and covered against insects.

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[160] A bridge over the old canal (al-Khalīj) in the southeastern part of the city, on the latitude of the mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn.

[161] For more details on *sanbūsik* see below, chapter II.A.D. "Wheat," p. 160.

[162] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 122; also quoted in Dreher, "Regard," 71.

[163] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 183, 186.

[164] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 186.

[165] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 30 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 54).

Apparently, the profession that excelled in all kinds of corrupt practices were *naqāniqiyyūn* or producers of lamb sausages, whose tricks were so numerous that, according to some of the *ḥisba* handbooks, it was impossible to know them all.[166] It was even suggested that sausage makers' shops were close to the *muḥtasib's* booth so that his control over them could be better and more effective. The sausage makers, who were supposed to use only good, clean, and lean meat, got in the inspector's books in many ways: they sprayed meat with water or added adulterants such as offal, cooked heads, tough beef, or camel meat to sausages; spiced roast fish, onions, and bean sprouts were also used. Another problem, which concerned not only the sausage makers, was that they did not always have a person to keep the flies off while the meat was being minced.

The merchants and producers in other branches of the food industry could be equally inventive and equally careless about hygiene. The milk dealers mixed milk with water; others sold bad cheese; and the sellers of dates and raisins improved their goods by spraying them with fat or sugar water and sold outdated pickles, old oil, or false spices. The fried fish sellers mixed fresh fish with old (unsold the previous day, which they should have thrown in the refuse heap outside the city) and fried them in improper oil (which was supposed to be inspected at least a few times a day).[167] Not to mention the confectionaries, whose ingredients and recipes were the most complicated of all—it was only the *ʿarīf*, a professional *muḥtasib's* assistant who could find out if they followed proper proportions, added natural honey or just the grape pulp, or mixed proper ingredients with rice flour, ground lentils or husk of sesame seeds.[168]

Considering the scope of the food sector in Cairo, one wonders how widespread were the instances of economizing the food production or of ignoring the rules of hygiene by food dealers. The historical annals are not too helpful in answering this question. As mentioned above, of the few existing chroniclers' records that concern the levying of penalties on fraudulent food producers, almost all refer to punishments inflicted on grain brokers and millers or persons having direct influence on bread

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[166] *Naqāniqiyyūn* also made and sold meat samosas (*sanbūsiks*); ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 38 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 62); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 158.

[167] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 57); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 178–79; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56–7.

[168] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40–1 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 63–4); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 181–84; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 47–9.

production. Such scantiness of information may have two reasons. First, it may suggest that no frauds were practiced or, second, that both the crimes and the punishments were so insignificant and socially harmless that there was no need to mention them in serious annals. The former possibility was advocated by Muḥammad Akram Khan, who claims that the cases dealt with in the *ḥisba* handbooks were in fact merely "hypothetical probabilities and not a real-life phenomenon obtaining at that time."[169] True, *ḥisba* manuals, like any other code, are prescriptive in character and, as such, are meant to be collections of regulations regarding certain practices and ways of conduct and not their descriptions. Nevertheless, it cannot be taken for granted that the fraud cases mentioned in the literature in question are but "hypothetical probabilities." On the contrary, the frequent occurrence of many of the described malpractice is clearly confirmed by the authors of the *ḥisba* books themselves (as ash-Shayzarī put it, "for most of them swindle in the ways we have described")[170] as well as by other sources—in the case of medieval Cairo, a treatise by Ibn al-Ḥājj, a Maghrebian religious scholar living in Cairo, is a mine of information for the study of this topic.[171]

The second possibility is much more probable, though difficult to prove. The frauds of food dealers could indeed be frequent, but of such insignificant character that even if successfully detected by the inspector they led at most to a loud argument, teaching the merchant a verbal lesson and, sometimes, confiscating the fake merchandise. Such events—contrary to cases that involved flogging and public pillory—were undeserving of the chroniclers' attention.[172] It was probably this lack of records that made

[169] The attitude of Muhammad Akram Khan was apparently influenced by his fears that studying of the *ḥisba* literature "may induce one to conclude that the Muslim society, even in its hey-days was rampant with corruption and fraud;" see his "Al-Ḥisba and the Islamic Economy," in Ibn Taymīya, *Public Duties in Islam: The Institution of the Ḥisba by al-Shaykh al-Imām Ibn Taymīya*, trans. Muhtar Holland, ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1982), 139–40.

[170] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 60 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 80).

[171] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 92–194. Still, it is difficult to confirm, in an explicit way, whether the frauds and malpractice were indeed so common that "the ability to maintain a diet in accordance with Muslim dietary rules was a privilege reserved for the elite groups who held a monopoly on knowledge and wealth;" see Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 211.

[172] To help the entrepreneurs observe the regulations, the *muḥtasib* had a set of punitive measures at his disposal. In the event of any suspicions about the merchant's honesty, the official was entitled to force him to promise a proper behavior in the future. If, however, the law was broken, he punished the guilty in a measure commensurate with the kind

R.P. Buckley conclude that the punitive measures such as banishments from the market, imprisonments, and seizure or the destruction of forbidden articles occurred only infrequently.[173]

In fact, the most probable hypothesis regarding fraud in the Cairene food industry refers to the authorities' inefficiency and slowness in identifying more serious swindlers. The network of informants could not—apart from single cases—be an effective means of investigation. Moreover, it is far from being certain that the *ʿarīf*, an official but also a fellow-professional, was indeed loyal to his state employer more than to his bazaar colleagues-in-craft.[174] Another important question in this context concerns the market inspector himself. The *ḥisba* treatises provide that the *muḥtasib* had to be an honest and modest man.[175] Having analyzed attitudes of this category of officials R.P. Buckley concludes, however, that "while a number of *muḥtasibs* do seem to have answered to these qualities, others were less than paragons of virtue."[176] According to al-Maqrīzī, in ninth/fifteenth-century Egypt the highest administrative and religious offices, including that of the *muḥtasib*, could be obtained only by bribes and connections. As a consequence, the positions were held by ignorant, corrupt, unjust, and oppressive persons[177] whose attitudes fit the portrait of a Damascene market inspector as drawn in the *Arabian Nights'* "The Jewish Physician's Tale." It is enough to mention, for instance, Sharaf ad-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥirrī (in office from 810/1407 to 812/1409), *muḥtasib* of both al-Qāhira and al-Fusṭāṭ, whom

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of transgression and degree of its relative harm. In such cases the *muḥtasib* might have merely taught the vendor a verbal lesson and confiscated the fake merchandise or ordered him to give it as alms. He could, however, also destroy the stand of the cheating merchant and chase him away from the market. In more serious instances the punishments were tougher, too: the *muḥtasib* had a *dirra*, kind of a whip made of buffalo or camel leather, filled with the date stones, and *ṭarṭūr*, a high felt conical cap decorated with pieces of colorful textiles, mussels, little bells and cat or fox tails. It was advisable that the two instruments hanged over the door of the *muḥtasib's* booth as a warning. To further humiliate a dishonest merchant the verdict of public pillory could be pronounced: the convicted man was put backwards on a donkey or a camel and paraded this way—to the people's enjoyment—along the streets of Cairo. In Europe, too, "the pillory was primarily a punishment for crimes committed in the marketplace;" see Turner, *Spice*, 109.

[173] Buckley, "*Muḥtasib*," 111.

[174] Particularly that their position "naturally lent itself to bribery;" see Buckley, "*Muḥtasib*," 113.

[175] Buckley, "*Muḥtasib*," 72–5; idem, *Market Inspector*, 30, n. 9.

[176] Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 30, n. 9.

[177] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 52.

al-Maqrīzī describes as a vile, foul, shameless, evil and offensive buffoon,[178] and Dawlāt Khujā, who served as Cairo *muḥtasib* in 841/1438 and whose death made people rejoice.[179] Having stressed that there existed some isolated examples of the Mamluk era *muḥtasibs* who had guarded their good name and honor, Aḥmad ʿAbd ar-Rāziq was able to name only two such functionaries: al-ʿAynī and al-Maqrīzī.[180]

The data on the tenure of the Cairo *muḥtasibs* is another indication of the decreasing of the authority of the office: while under the Early Mamluks an average tenure lasted approximately four years, during the Circassian period it was only ten and a half months on the average.[181] In such circumstances the probability that law would be implemented was further reduced by the functionaries' low resistance to bribes and gifts. The growing ineffectiveness of *muḥtasibs* may mean that the representatives of the Cairene food industry were, in the decadent period of the Mamluk state, able to evade the inspectors' control even easier than in previous centuries.

Summing up, if we consider what we know from *ḥisba* manuals, and combine it with what Ibn al-Ḥājj and al-Maqrīzī say, we may conclude that generally in the Cairo of the Middle Ages, food dealers' malpractices were not uncommon, with a tendency to worsen in the Circassian period. It seems that the first century of the Ottoman occupation did not bring much change: Muṣṭafā ʿAlī of Gallipoli, a Turkish historian who visited Cairo in 1599, noticed "absolute chaos in business life" with several price systems in every shop.[182] What a contrast with the days of the Fatimids, when a meticulous foreign observer could note that "the merchants of Old Cairo were honest in their dealings" since "if one of them was caught cheating a customer, he was mounted on a camel with a bell in his hand and paraded about the city ringing the bell and crying out" about what he had done.[183]

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[178] Quoted by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, in William Popper, *History of Egypt 1382–1469 A.D. Translated from the Arabic Annals of Abu l-Maḥasin ibn Taghrī Birdī* (*Part III, 1412–1422 A.D.*) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 119.

[179] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV/3, 1063. Cf. also Lane's comments on a nineteenth-century Cairene *muḥtasib*; *Manners*, 127–9.

[180] ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, "La *ḥisba*," 115–78.

[181] Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 4.

[182] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 44.

[183] The Persian traveler's account, together with al-Musabbiḥī's records mentioned earlier, prove the higher effectiveness of the Cairo *muḥtasibs* in the past; see *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 55.

Considering the above, it should not probably be surprising that some city dwellers refrained from buying ready-made goods from the street and chose the much more demanding option of preparing their own meals or dough at home in order to take them to the public oven. This custom was particularly noticeable in the case of bread. Indeed, most middle-class Cairenes avoided buying the street bread—they would rather buy the wheat, send it to the miller's, then knead their own dough and send it on special plates (*aṭbāq*)[184] to the bakery or street oven to be baked.[185] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (d. 729/1329), himself a Cairo *muḥtasib's* aide, seems to confirm that the majority of population resorted to the practice in question because they preferred to control their bread production process personally.[186] Analogous practices developed in the case of cooked food: some people prepared their dishes at home and carried them to the public oven to cook or bake.[187]

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[184] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 24 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 49). Actually, we cannot rule out that the form and function of the medieval Cairene *aṭbāq* was very similar to, if not identical with, the Egyptian platters of Pharaonic and Graeco-Roman periods whose intended use remains unidentified to this day (Delwen Samuel, "Brewing and Baking," in Nicholson and Shaw, *Ancient Egyptian Materials*, 567–8). Considering all what is known about the ancient platters, the thesis that they were used to carry the dough to the baker's seems to be logical and acceptable. Actually, similar objects (probably dating back to the Middle Ages) were excavated in Persia, where they were still used as late as in the 1940's (Wilkinson, "Heating and Cooking," 282–91). Cf. also terra cotta baking molds excavated in the Old Babylonian Palace at Mari, ca. 1780 B.C.E., reproduced in Bober, *Art*, 67; and "el plato de pan" (*ṭābaq*) discussed by Sonia Gutierréz Lloret in "Panes, hogazas y fogones portátiles, dos formas cerámicas destinadas a la cocción del pan el-Andalus: el hornillo (*tannūr*) y el plato (*ṭābaq*)," *Lucentum* IX–X (1990–1991): 171–3.

[185] Ibn al-Ḥājj, however, advised to bake bread not in any oven, but only on the premises where "the bread of mark" (*furn khubz al-ʿalāma*) was being baked, because in such places clean combustible was used as a rule—as opposed to the ovens baking home-made bread; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 169. The term "*ʿalāma*" could also be used in reference to finely milled flour (*ad-daqīq al-ʿalāma*). According to Goitein, "*ʿalāma*" designated a trademark; *Economic Foundations*, 81.

As there was a possibility that a customer's bread could be mistakenly given to another customer, or that they become saturated with odors of various meat or fish dishes cooked in the same oven, it was suggested that the owners of the bread, or their servants, stay and watch their dough being baked. Cf. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 169; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 155; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 24 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 49); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 61–2. See also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 234–44, where it is said that "the Geniza people, or those of them who could afford this, preferred to buy wheat at harvest time. The grain, that was to suffice for the year, was stored in big jars of porous clay; these were put on the uppermost floor of the house, preferably on its sunny side, to protect them from humidity. According to needs, the grain was taken to the miller."

[186] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 153.

[187] This was also practiced in Ottoman epoch; see Hanna, *Habiter au Caire*, 155.

The link between this phenomenon and the question of market control appears to be clear: it was the *muḥtasibs'* impotence to check the food dealers' dishonesty that forced people—albeit indirectly—to behave this way. In other words, this kind of behavior, as practiced by Cairenes, seems to have been an inconvenient option followed by those who either had their reasons to distrust the street cooks/bakers or disliked their offer but were unable to afford what the renowned or trusted cooks/bakers prepared. However, the ineffective *muḥtasib*, responsible as he was for certain socio-culinary developments, should probably not be considered the original source of a custom or usage.[188] His impotence forms only a partial explanation of these practices. Both in the case of bread and of cooked food, there also were other considerations.

As for bread, it should be kept in mind that the habit of preparing bread dough at home and taking it to the public baker was not a Cairene medieval invention. Well-established not only in ancient Palestine[189] and Egypt,[190] but in Rome and Pompeii as well, this old Near Eastern and Mediterranean tradition was followed regardless of the fact that bread was easily available in the nearby bakery or in the market. This should not be surprising if we take into consideration that ancient Egyptian, Roman, and Palestinian loaves had a lot in common. One of the features they shared was a high degree of contamination, resulting from the fact that grain was usually ground together with foreign matter and dirt.[191] Most of the inclusions were unintentional (though the ancient bakers may also have adulterated bread) which means that the stones, sand, dust, chaff, etc. were not put in the grain on purpose, but rather were never removed from it. The reason behind it was in fact prosaic: the "fairly tedious and time consuming"[192] nature of most of the cleaning processes apparently made the employees of public bakeries unwilling to put more effort into sieving

[188] See William G. Sumner, *Folkways: A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morale* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 7–8.

[189] Where, however, the public oven is said to have been used by the poorest; Henri Daniel-Rops, *Życie w Palestynie w czasach Chrystusa* (*La vie quotidienne en Palestine au temps de Jésus*) (Warszawa: PIW, 2001), 215; cf. also entry "Bread" in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Old Tappman, N.J.: Spire Books, 1975).

[190] Montet, *Vie quotidienne*, 89. On bread in ancient Egypt see also Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 501–28; Ruffer, *Food*, 49–52.

[191] Naum Jasny, "The Daily Bread of the Ancient Greeks and Romans," *OSIRIS* 4 (1950): 227–53; Samuel, "Brewing," 559, 562–3.

[192] Samuel, "Brewing," 562.

the dust, winnowing the chaff, dehusking the grain, and hand picking the stones.

The effect was that the daily bread consumed by significant part of the population in classical antiquity was hardly edible. The bread from ancient commercial bakeries had one advantageous feature, though: it was cheaper than the home-made variety, so that the poor could afford it. And, in fact, it was only those of modest means who were consuming it. Whoever could choose not to buy the street bread, did not do it. If one was interested in more edible staff, the grain had to be cleaned by his/her own household or family, the dough made in the home, and—if he/she did not possess an oven of his/her own—taken to be baked by the public baker.

The medieval Cairene practice of kneading one's own dough and giving it to the public oven to bake, although directly associated with the impotence of the *muḥtasib*, had thus its beginnings far back in the ancient past. It did not constitute, however, a habit that lasted through the ages for its own sake or for the sake of tradition—the practice survived for so long[193] because its primary reason, grain pollution, never disappeared. With the grain cleaning process invariably fairly tedious and time consuming, and the improvement of the bread's quality apparently considered unprofitable,[194] the negligence of bakers and their employees became a sort of tradition that the following generations of these professionals continued to cherish. Moreover, the practice of careless cleaning of grain,[195] transferred to medieval Cairo from antiquity, was with time supplemented by various purposeful adulterating practices.[196] Cairenes, by the way, were not the only medieval successors of antiquity in this field. As far as we

[193] The custom of carrying one's own dough to the baker's was still followed in the nineteenth-century Cairo. See al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, I, 37; II, 184, 394.

[194] For ratio between the weight and price of cleaned and uncleaned wheat see Popper, *Egypt and Syria*, II, 102.

[195] Naum Jasny is of opinion that the practice of using the sieve in ancient Egypt is unlikely to have been common; Jasny, "Daily Bread," 243.

[196] It is difficult to assert today if the street bread of medieval Cairo was as polluted as the ancient Egyptian variety; see Jasny, "Daily Bread," 243. On inclusions in Egyptian bread see Samuel, "Brewing," 562–5; Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 507–8; also Bober, *Art*, 39–40.

To my knowledge, there are no studies that would let one compare the state of the medieval Cairenes' teeth with those of the Egyptian mummies (whose worn state of teeth is commonly explained by the presence of sand in their bread). We have to depend here on Ibn al-Ḥājj who confirms the presence of various foreign inclusions in Cairene loaves; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 172–4; also al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 76.

know, the practice was also followed in Muslim Spain,[197] the Maghreb[198] and, possibly, in medieval Mesopotamia.[199]

As for the custom of preparing one's own food at home and carrying it to the public oven to cook, its development and cultivation was, to a certain degree at least, related to the bad quality of the take-away food which was cooked in the street cook shops. It should be kept in mind, however, that the instances of similar customs practiced elsewhere in the medieval Islamic world do not indicate such a motive behind people's behavior. For example, the workers of some Iraqi (?) city, while going to work in the morning, used to leave their clay pots at the baker's, so that the dishes, slowly cooked in hot ash for many hours, were ready to be collected when their owners were going back home in the evening.[200] Apparently, for the workers it was the most comfortable and cheapest way of having a warm dinner. The inhabitants of Muslim Spain used to leave their cooking pots (*qudūr, ṭawājīn*) at the street oven owner's, too.[201] Since the Andalusian houses were generally equipped with regular kitchens, with hearths or ovens, plates, and utensils, as well as pantries full of oil, vinegar, and food preserved in pottery jars,[202] the street cooks' shops were neither the

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[197] Rachel Arié, "Remarques sur l'alimentation des Musulmanes d'Espagne au cours du Bas Moyen Age," in idem, *Etudes sur la civilisation de l'Espagne musulmane* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 142–55; Derek J. Latham, who studied the bread production in medieval Málaga basing on as-Saqaṭī's *ḥisba* manual, doubts the poor quality of the Málagan bazaar bread. The main cause behind Latham's reasoning is that he cannot see any data in as-Saqaṭī's work that would indicate the low food value of the local bread. However unconvincing his arguments at this point are, Latham quotes very interesting information concerning the bread trade in early twentieth-century Tangier and Fes, where self-respecting inhabitants had their dough kneaded in the home and baked in the communal oven. Market bread was "unsavory, of poor quality, and produced under unhygienic conditions;" see Derek J. Latham, "Some observations on the bread trade in Muslim Málaga (ca. 1200)," *JSS* 29/1 (1984): 120. For general comments on bread in the medieval Arab world see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 99–103.

[198] Cf. M. Talbi, "Quelques données sur la vie sociale en Occident musulman d'après un traité de *ḥisba* du XVe siècle," *Arabica* 1 (1954): 294–306.

[199] Cf. Waines, "Cereals," 255–85 (however, Waines's assumption is based on the *ḥisba* manual written in Egypt by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa).

[200] Aly Mazaheri, *Życie codzienne muzułmanów w średniowieczu* (*La vie quotidenne des musulmans au Moyen Age X au XIII siècle*) (Warszawa: PIW, 1972), 156.

[201] Cf., for example, David Waines, "The Culinary Culture of al-Andalus," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. S.K. Jayyusi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 725–38; Marín, "Pots and Fire," 294–95, 299, and Spanish *ḥisba* manuals.

[202] Rachel Arié, *Espagne Musulmane au temps des Nasrides* (*1232–1492*) (Paris: É. de Baccard, 1973), 376–77; for kitchen and storerooms in the Muslim domestic architecture of Murcia see plan of an excavated house of San Nicholas, Julio Navarro Palazón, "La maison de San Nicolas," in *Maison musulmane*, 22–5 and idem., "The Andalusī House in Siyasā: Attempt at a Typological Classification," in Waines, *Patterns*, 43–61. On Andalusian cooking

essential nor the most common source of meals. Apparently, however, their services were sometimes more comfortable. In the case of big or sophisticated dishes it must have been easier, faster, and better to cook home-made food in the public oven. Sometimes, the dishes were cooked at home and then carried to the public *furn* only to brown their surface.[203]

All these reasons might have also worked in Cairo. Moreover, in Cairo, as anywhere else where the custom was practiced, people made their own food at home and carried it to the public for many other reasons. They could do it because, for example, of the diet prescribed by the physician, or of their fondness for some particular dish which could not be purchased in the bazaar. Sometimes, they also simply bought fish from the fish dealer's, or meat from the butcher's, and gave it to the oven owner or a street cook to prepare.[204] Yet, the cooks' or bakers' dishonesty, and the *muḥtasib's* inefficiency behind it, were often a factor influencing people's behavior.

4. The Cairene Cook

Actually, the sources are not informative enough to draw a collective portrait of Cairene cooks—either of those preparing food in the city streets or of those working in private households. The existing documentation, scattered and extremely fragmentary, provides no clue as to who these people were or how they learned their professions.[205] One can, nevertheless, form two basic observations. One is that the Egyptian cooks must have commanded high esteem in the Near East and surpassed other nationalities

habits which involved the use of both the communal (*furn*) and the home (*tannūr*) oven see Marín, "Pots and Fire," 294–5.

[203] Marín, "Pots and Fire," 294–5, 300.

[204] This was also practiced in, for example, medieval Damascus; see Ibn Ṭawq, *Yawmiyyāt*, I, 45, where the author mentions that he bought two sheep's heads which were subsequently cooked in the kitchen of certain Taqī ad-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī in the district of al-Qubaybāt.

[205] The texts discussing career of al-Ḥājj ʿAlī *khiwān salār*, the cook of sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammd (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* II/3, 685–6) or of Ibrāhīm aṭ-Ṭabbākh, the cook of sultan al-Malik al-ʿAzīz (Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 297–99, 311, 313), do not include this kind of data, either. For some remarks on professional cooks of the Abbasid era see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 26–33; Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 11–15. For concise information on the personnel of the kitchens of the Mamluk sultans see ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī*, 85–99. For interesting data regarding the training of cooks in the Ottoman Turkey (incomparable, of course, to medieval Cairo circumstances), see Emine F. Tugay, *Three Centuries—Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 255–57.

in their professional excellence: after all, there must have been a reason for which Naṣr ad-Dawla Aḥmad Ibn Marwān al-Kurdī, the extravagant lord of Diyār Bakr (d. 453/1061), sent many of his cooks to Egypt—and not anywhere else—so that they could master their profession there.[206] The other is that whenever professionalism of the Egyptian cooks is referred to in the sources, it almost always relates to women doing the job.

The latter point is particularly interesting in the context of what Felix Fabri, a German Dominican friar who visited Cairo in 1483, observed in this respect. According to him, one of the reasons why the majority of the city's population did not cook at home was that Egyptian men, who generally treated women with contempt, "were absolutely not able to eat anything cooked or prepared by a woman. That was why no woman dared to approach the fire on which the food was being cooked; that was also why one could never notice a woman preparing meat dumplings or soup for the baby."[207] And, as Fabri noticed, since home cooking inevitably involved interference of women in this activity, the food was not prepared at home at all.[208]

Fabri's opinion can hardly be accepted as the real reason of why the food was not cooked at home in Cairo, though his views are not as absurd as they may seem. Maya Shatzmiller supposes that women's involvement in the process of food production was somehow limited because of the prejudice that menstruating women had a negative influence on the quality of food.[209] Nevertheless, it seems there was no universal regulation or generally accepted practice regarding women's contact with food being prepared. In general, women of the medieval Islamic world were not entirely kept away from preparing food and performed various tasks which involved them directly in the process of cooking, baking, and distributing food. There were female millers, vinegar makers, bakers, sweets makers, and sellers of cooked beans. Moreover, in medieval Baghdad, for instance, it was "exclusively the woman who prepared the meals for the whole household."[210] Traditional preparation of couscous in the Maghreb

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[206] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī at-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿIlmiyya, 1995), VIII, 356; also quoted in Zayyāt, "Fann aṭ-Ṭabkh," 14; see also records mentioned below, nn. 216, 218.

[207] Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 568.

[208] For comments to Fabri's remarks see also above, chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," pp. 96–7.

[209] Shatzmiller, *Labour*, 352.

[210] Waines, "Cereals," 255–85. For examples of amateur women-cooks in the Abbasid times see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 25; also Ghāda al-Ḥijjawī al-Qaddūmī, *Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa-al-Tuḥaf: Book of Gifts and Rarities: Selections Compiled in the Fifteenth*

was exclusively a women's task, too.[211] What is interesting, Ibn Buṭlān, a physician and theologian of the fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad, considered the profession of a cook, apart from that of a nurse, singer, and dancer, as particularly suitable for female slaves. According to him, female cooks were better than male ones "because of their constancy in the job and their understanding of the secrets of high cuisine: good balance and good sauce-making."[212] But Ibn Buṭlān was a Christian, which might have been of significance here.

As far as Cairo is concerned, there is no evidence to prove the existence of any serious bias against women cooking the food. In fact, Ibn al-Ḥājj confirms there were women who went so far in practicing purity as to refrain from touching wheat or any other food or even approaching the pantry during menstruation. However, Ibn al-Ḥājj, famous for tracing the slightest manifestations of alien, non-Islamic influences, criticized such behavior and considered it a non-Islamic innovation of Judaist origin.[213] Moreover, he saw nothing unusual in a woman preparing bread dough; his only concern was, predictably enough, that she did not meet strangers, including the baker boy who came to take the dough to the public oven.[214]

Furthermore, there are records which prove not only the absence of a prejudice but also an appreciation of the mastery of women cooks. This refers, for example, to the accounts dealing with professional, highly-qualified female slave-cooks, who had first worked in the Fatimid palaces and, after the fall of the dynasty, were employed by the Ayyubids and ran street kitchens.[215] The same refers to a number of other records such as, for instance, that by Usāma Ibn Munqidh (the sixth/twelfth century),

Century from an Eleventh Century Manuscript on Gifts and Treasures (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 221–2.

[211] This same referred to various stages of bread making, such as milling the grain or kneading the dough, in many parts of the Arabic-Islamic world; see Mielck, *Terminologie*, 39–40; *EI²*, V, "Khubz" by Ch. Pellat.

[212] See Ibn Buṭlān's treatise on the purchase of slaves, possibly composed during his visit to Fatimid Cairo, *Risāla fī Shirāʾ ar-Raqīq wa-Taqlīb al-ʿAbīd* (Cairo, 1954), 386–8, discussed in Delia Cortese, Simonetta Calderini, *Women and the Fatimids in the World of Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 204.

[213] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 68. See also Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Sharʿi Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 99–122; cf. Amoretti, *Un altro Medioevo*, 207.

[214] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 172.

[215] See also above, chapter I.2. "High and low cooking: exchange and diffusion," pp. 86–8.

reporting a story of a retired Frankish knight who had a manor in Antioch and who never touched food other than that prepared by his Egyptian women cooks.[216] Or a record by al-Maqrīzī who reports on a Mamluk state vizier in whose house there were two female slave servants, each of whom mastered eighty kinds of fried dishes, apart from other kinds of food.[217] Last but not least, there is also an interesting account of female slave-cooks included in the gift set sent (in 661/1262) by sultan Baybars to Berke Khān on the occasion of the latter's conversion to Islam.[218] Since the cooks, either male or female, were not commonly dispatched as gifts to rulers, this may again confirm the appreciation and esteem for the talents that the Egyptian cooks displayed in the area. The parallel reason could be, of course, that the cooks sent by Baybars to the court of yesteryear pagans were meant not only to prove the generosity of the Mamluk ruler but also to give Berke Khān a chance to appreciate what the proper Islamic cuisine (or at least what Baybars considered as such) had to offer.

All these records contradict the remarks of Felix Fabri who maintained that the Egyptian men were unable to eat anything that woman cooked. They do not prove, however, that he had no ground whatsoever to form his statement. By the time Fabri visited Cairo the circumstances in the city changed and many things were not the same as they had been in the Early or High Middle Ages. What apparently did change since the Fatimid, Ayyubid and, maybe, early Mamluk times, was the gender of the city's street cooks. By the eighth/fourteenth century, if not earlier, women seemed to no longer cook in the city markets. If they did, Ibn al-Ḥājj, the fiercest critic of the Cairene female behavior, would not neglect to comment on it. By his time the public cooking business was, most probably, dominated entirely by men. In those of the private households which did not use street cooks' services, however, slave women probably still worked in the kitchen.[219]

The credibility of Fabri's account notwithstanding, there was an element of truth in what he observed: women of the family did not cook in Cairo. Wherever there was no kitchen, food was brought ready-made from the street. Wherever there were kitchen facilities, it was the slaves who

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[216] Usāma Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, 140.
[217] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, 59.
[218] For references and some more details on the gift see below, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," p. 303.
[219] In the end of the nineteenth century Turkish families in Egypt still employed local female cooks; see Tugay, *Three Centuries*, 237.

did the cooking. In practical terms, this meant—to paraphrase remarks of a Turkish visitor to Cairo—that the Cairene women, in contrast with Turkish women, were bad housewives who did not care to cook food in their houses, just as they did not bother to do the sewing or embroidering, evidently preferring to "pass their days in idleness."[220]

The situation that the Cairene woman did not cook had a number of interesting social implications linking food and cooking to the issues of gender, love and sex. Social scholars tend to be unwavering regarding the connection: "food is a female concern, and often one of the main sources of a woman's power in the household. Women gather food, shop, choose what is to be eaten, and cook it."[221] At the same time, as one of the most famous authors dealing with sociology of food and eating observes, "cooking, like digesting, is a common metaphor for pregnancy. The woman offers cooking in exchange for sex; the man offers sex in exchange for cooking."[222]

Since in medieval Cairo free women were given little chance to cook, these clear equations did not apply. The peculiarities of the system of street kitchens, which made the art of cooking the exclusive work of professional cooks, relieved Cairene women of the most arduous of house duties. At the same time, however, the system apparently deprived them of the most natural means of feminine expression: unlike many other women who can "'reward' men by producing a special dish," and who can "show disapproval by . . . refusing to put effort into the meal,"[223] the women of medieval Cairo could not use cooking to express their feelings. But the meaning of cooking was not only a matter of reward or disapproval. Its actual potential was masterly pictured in a certain story of love and of Mexican cuisine, in which the food, cooked by the woman and eaten by the man, becomes the language of a highly passionate dialogue and a

[220] "Mornings and evenings," Muṣṭafā ʿAlī noted, "they receive their allocated allowances from their men in the form of cash, and [with these] they eat the indigestible food that is cooked in the bazaars;" *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 41, 44; Leo Africanus (in Egypt in the second decade of the sixteenth century) confirmed that women in Cairo did not cook; see l'Africain, *Description*, 515.

[221] Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), 276; cf. also another statement of this author: "Men go, get food, and give it to their wives, while women stay, receive it, and serve it forth" (ibid., 272).

[222] Ibid., 273.

[223] Ibid., 273, 276. For discussion on the link between food and sex as a subject of metaphor in classical Arabic literature see van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 109–118.

substitute for physical passion. The story, titled *Like Water for Chocolate*,[224] or the dialogue it depicts, could not happen in Cairo.

But the presumed absence of facilities for cooking in the apartments, the omnipresent catering services, and the common use of slaves could not free the city's population from all the rules linking food to love and passion. The proverb "through the stomach to man's heart" held true also for the Arabic-Islamic culture of the Middle Ages, Cairo included. The *Arabian Nights* prove that using food (even though cooked by someone else) as a token of love was not impossible: in "The Christian Broker's Tale" a young Baghdadi merchant and his Cairene lover are as much concerned about making love as they are about composing their meals and eating together. Food and its consumption apparently could have had a highly erotic context also in Cairo: although local women generally could not "reward" men by producing a special dish, one cannot rule out the possibility that in Cairo, as elsewhere, "eating can be spoken of as synonymous with the sex act itself."[225]

5. Customers

Understandably enough, members of the broadly understood middle-class who had no kitchens in their apartments constituted the main part of the cook shops clientele. Quite probably, the services of the street kitchens were also used by such members of the working-class as skilled laborers and craftsmen.[226] The financial elite of Cairo, on the other hand, did not have any particular reason to use the services of the bazaar system of nourishment at all. Most of the great merchants, high officers, and officials must have owned houses equipped with kitchens and employed significant number of servants and slaves who cared for the buttery and meals.[227]

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[224] Laura Esquivel, *Como agua para chocolate*, Anchor 1994, 2001.

[225] Visser, *Rituals*, 273.

[226] While discussing the meals of the Geniza Jews, Goitein maintains that "the morning meal of the laborers was provided by their employers. This was not done in kind but in money, since food of all descriptions was prepared by specialists in the bazaar and could be bought from them. A master mason who received 1 ¼ dirhams for his lunch, could buy for himself a varied nourishing meal for this sum, whereas his helpers, who got no *ghadā*ʾ at all, probably had to be content with bread and onions or the like, the usual fare of the poor;" *Daily Life*, 229–30. It is not unlikely that the Muslims followed similar patterns.

[227] In fact, not only members of financial elite, but also institutions such as *khānqā*s, hospitals, or larger college-mosques, had their own kitchens, see Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 204.

Judging by archeological material alone, it would be impossible to state definitely if the rich owners of palaces and villas availed themselves of the take-away services.[228] The evidence we have at our disposal is in fact limited to a number of medieval *porte-manger* boxes. Of the two such objects which date back to late Mamluk times and which are in possession of the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, one belonged to an *amīr* of a hundred (nr. 3953), the other to *amīr khāzindār* (nr. 3954)—both high-ranking officers of some financial status.[229] Considering, however, the military profession of the vessels' owners, we can by no means be sure that they were designed for carrying warm food from the bazaar and not for the field use. Moreover, one can take it for granted that another extant example of a vessel of this kind, in possession of the British Museum, was not used by its unknown though well-to-do owner for bringing the street food home. This ninth/fifteenth-century Damascene triple brass box of richly engraved tinned copper is provided with a lid that served as a lunch bowl[230] (a feature that distinguishes this object from the previous two), which suggests that this example of *porte-manger* could rather be taken for a picnic, journey, pilgrimage, hunting, or war expedition. We cannot rule out, however, that the man was a merchant who used the box to get lunch from the street and then eat it in his shop. But even if all three lunch boxes were not used to carry bazaar meals home,[231] we still should not exclude the possibility that their rich owners ate, if only occasionally, this kind of food.

[228] Sometimes, if the number of guests they invited exceeded their logistic capabilities, those richest of the city's inhabitants probably used the catering services or hired a "company" that prepared food for the banquets, parties and festive occasions (*ṭabbākhūn al-walāʾim*). This kind of service is mentioned in only one of the medieval *ḥisba* handbooks, namely that by Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 181. David Waines confirms that catering services were also popular in medieval Baghdad: "the communal oven would also cater to any household's requirements on festive occasions;" Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 17.

[229] Gaston Wiet, *Catalogue général du Muséee Arabe du Caire. Objets en cuivre* (Le Caire: IFAO, 1932, repr. 1984), 98–100 (plates LXVI and LXVII). The third example of *porte-manger* presented in the *Catalogue* (nr. 3368, pl. LXIX) is composed of single container and belonged to certain Mamluk cupbearer of the tenth/sixteenth century.

[230] Rachel Ward, *Islamic Metal Work* (London: British Museum Press, 1993), 119.

[231] As were the similar though more modest objects mentioned in the Geniza papers; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 141. Cf. also von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 108, where mamluks carrying boxes for bread and meat are mentioned; and Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī, *Nuzha*, 68, where the narrator reports how he kept trying, for all day long, to go to the bazaar to get some food, but each time he went down he forgot either the platter (*ṣaḥfa*), or the lid (*mikabba*) to cover it.

As for the written source material, Ibn al-Ḥājj's references to the procedure of taking warm meals from the cook's stand are not too helpful here: the *qudūr* or pots he mentions, with cover or without, could signify the brass carriers, but it remains unknown to whom they belonged. Although it is clear from the text that the persons who carried them were generally servants and not the meal owners themselves, it is not possible to define the social status of the latter,[232] for having a servant or a slave was a common practice among the Cairenes and not an exclusive privilege of the richest. There is, however, a passage in *Khiṭaṭ* that sheds some light on the question: al-Maqrīzī mentions a certain Taqī ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, *nāẓir al-khawāṣṣ ash-sharīfa* (inspector of the sultan's private treasury) who every night, after the evening prayer, used to go down to Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square and buy things for the *wazīr* Fakhr ad-Dīn Mājid (ʿAbd Allāh) Ibn Khaṣīb, spending 250 silver dirhams on fried chicken, sand grouse, small pigeons and fried sparrows.[233]

The habit practiced by the high-ranking state employee who—though no doubt an owner of a big house—preferred to have his favorite foods brought from Bayn al-Qaṣrayn rather than be prepared in his own kitchen, allows us to make a number of observations. First, the account suggests that for some reasons it made no sense for this bird-meat loving minister to use his own kitchen. Either the street cooks prepared the dishes better than his own staff, or the operation of getting such a quantity of fresh (live) birds and preparing them at home was too annoying—after all, why bother if they do it better just around the corner? The price, apparently, did not matter. Whatever his reasons, it goes without saying that what he ordered every night must have been of good, if not of perfect, quality. What is the most interesting about this record, however, is that it lets us assume that the *wazīr* was not an exception among the financial (and political) elite and conclude that his fellow-officials, big merchants and officers of the military elite, also ate the food from the cook's shops—even if they did not do it so frequently and in such quantities.

Availing oneself of the street cook shops and food stands was not, however, an exclusive custom of the middle- and working-class or, from time to time, of the rich. There were also the city's poor, those "who do not have homes and sleep in the streets and are more numerous than the whole

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232 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 189.

233 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 29; idem, *Sulūk*, III/1, 59; Ibn Iyās, *Badaʾiʿ*, I/1, 574.

population of Venice, including the rabble."[234] Western travelers generally believed that the number of the Cairo poor equaled 100,000.[235] The estimations, even if exaggerated, are significant; for even if we take into consideration that a part of this group had some income, the number of those who, for the better part of the day hung around the cooks' stands waiting for their chance to get something to eat, must have been very high.[236] A customer buying a take-away dish was often scrutinized by various beggars: poor, homeless, strangers, Sufis,[237] or hungry mothers and children. Sometimes he was asked for some food, but he usually refused: the person who carried the meal was almost always not its owner, but only a cook's assistant or a servant who could not decide about somebody else's property. To prevent the poor from looking at the contents and made its smell less annoying to their empty stomachs, it was advisable to have the pots covered.[238] Only occasionally did somebody give them a bite to eat, "small enough to increase their hunger instead of eliminating it."[239]

The beggars' position could not, however, be so entirely hopeless. It had probably been not much worse than in Lane's times, when the beggars were "almost sure of obtaining either food or money... in consequence of the charitable disposition of their countrymen and the common habit which the tradespeople have of eating in their shops, and generally giving a morsel of their food to those who ask for it."[240] It seems that generally asking for cash alms and then buying the food at the street cook's

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[234] Von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya*, 59.

[235] See Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49; Gucci, in ibid., 100. Sigoli, in ibid., writes on 50,000 people who "have neither house nor roof for a home;" also cf. Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 3, 108.

[236] The food shops' owners were often bothered by scampish boys, who scrutinized a shop or a kitchen and jumped in from time to time in order to steal the chosen food. Sometimes, if there was no chance to catch anything, they just touched the food with their fingers (Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 188). It is quite probable that they did not always do this out of hunger—rather, they were just killing time and wanted to get on the shop attendant's nerves.

[237] From what Ibn Baṭṭūṭa reports about the Sufis, it seems that even those who did not beg in the streets ate bazaar food. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's account, there was a custom in the Cairene *zāwiya*s that in the morning a servant (*khādim*; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa spells it "*khadīm*;" cf. *khādim al-khānqā* in Tāj ad-Dīn Abū Naṣr as-Subkī, *Kitāb Muʿīd an-Niʿam wa-Mubīd an-Niqam*, ed. D.W. Myhrman /London: Luzac & Co., 1908/, 179–80) of the *zāwiya* visited the Sufis, each of whom told him what foods he needed. So when they gathered for a meal, each man was given his bread and his broth in a bowl (*inā*ʾ) that he did not share with anybody. They ate twice a day. Each Friday night they received sweets of sugar; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, I, 204.

[238] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 189.

[239] Ibid., 189.

[240] Lane, *Manners*, 327.

once a required sum was collected, constituted a more reliable method of day-to-day survival. Some ate their meal alone, some collected the money together and purchased a common bowl, then "gathered in a corner and sat there to eat their meal."[241]

Summing up, there was no group in the Cairene society that would, for any particular reasons, decline to accept what the street cooks cooked. Most probably, everybody had their favorite kitchens and stands where they particularly liked, or had, to buy: sometimes because of the cooked food's quality, sometimes because of the price, sometimes because of the shop's location, or sometimes because of the force of habit.

In the discussion of food, the question of the social order is always of importance and in medieval Cairo social class mattered, too. As anywhere else in the world, the choice of food was not independent from class affiliation. Unlike the case in other parts of the medieval world, however, the discussion of the Cairene population and its diet cannot be solved by using an elementary "rich man's food—poor man's food" opposition. The pattern, customarily applied to the European history,[242] is sometimes similarly used in reference to Arabic-Islamic medieval urban societies, probably by way of following the well-known precedent.[243] And, usually, it does not fit.

Not surprisingly, in the case of the Cairene culinary culture it could not fit, either. Therefore, interpreting the city menu in terms of a classic contrast between the "cooking of the rich" and the "cooking of the poor" had to result in corrupting the image of both the Cairenes' diet and some aspects of the social order of medieval Cairo. One of the effects of following such an interpretation is the impression that Cairene society was made up exclusively of the rich who formed some kind of the elite class and of the poor who formed the rest of the city's inhabitants. This goes hand in hand with the impression that the difference between the elite cuisine and the cuisine of the rest of the city's inhabitants can be

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[241] Fabri, *Voyage*, 109; see also al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 95.

[242] Cf., for example, Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 87–99; Bober, *Art*, 226–9; Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1981), 183–203; Goody, *Cooking*, 97–153.

[243] Also "rich cooking and the poor cooking," "high/*haute* cuisine and low cuisine," " 'court' and 'peasant' cuisine" versions of the expression are possible. See, for example, Goody, *Cooking*, 128–33; Braudel, *Structures*, 199–203; Finkel "King Mutton," I, 138, whose idea was followed and developed by Rodinson, "Studies," 114–15; also van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 98, and Marín, "Literatura y gastronomía," 150; ibid., "Sobre alimentación," 83–5. M.M. Ahsan, while phrasing the title of one of his book's chapters "Food common to rich and poor" possibly followed the discussed pattern, too; see his *Social Life*, 130.

perceived as analogical to the difference between high and low cooking. In effect, one is left with the conviction that the menu of the rich consisted of an infinite set of sophisticated dishes the recipes for which were collected in the cookbooks, while the remaining part of the city's population had to follow some poor, mostly vegetarian, diet. This, generally, is not the true picture of the medieval Cairene foodstyle.

Like other urban centers of the Arabic-Islamic medieval world, Cairo was by no means a black-and-white, rich-and-poor space. Like in the case of other urban centers of this world, the rather limited circles of the rich on the one hand, and the army of the poor on the other, were not the only strata of the Cairene population. Accordingly, the simple opposition between high and low cooking is not adequate to interpret the alimentary practices of the Cairenes, because the foods of the rich and those of the poor were by no means the only nutritional alternatives accessible in their city. The above is not to contradict the rule that food *is* a marker of social status, or to assert that the notion of high and low cooking may not be applicable to Cairo at all. Obviously enough, the city had its rich and its poor. Between the two extremes there was, however, a significant, enterprising, and a very diverse middle-class.

One of the reasons for the fact that the simple rich man's food—poor man's food pattern, disregarding the middle-class, cannot be applied to the medieval Cairene society, is the very existence of this class in Cairo. Another reason is related to the situation discussed earlier, where medieval Cairenes, unlike most of other urban communities and societies of the time, generally did not cook at home but used the services offered by public kitchens and street food stands. The street generally catered for everybody and everybody, including the rich and the poor, used the street catering services. This phenomenon created an interesting context for the social dimension of the menu. What happened was that the majority of popular dishes on the city's bazaar offer could also be found in the menu of Cairene elites, and vice versa.

True, most (but not all!) of the plates proposed by the street cooks could be lacking in subtleness and elegance if compared to the specialties served by the Arabic-Islamic *haute cuisine* whose recipes were documented in the cookbooks for the well-to-do. But, at the same time, these recipes or, rather, the dishes they featured, were not a form of art for art's sake, appreciated by a number of snobbish connoisseurs only,[244] and

[244] Cf. David Waines, according to whom "an interest in gastronomy appears to have been a pastime of various patrician personalities including several princes of the ruling

resembling the imperial Roman or Renaissance kind of luxuriousness and eccentricity.[245] What an average customer bought from the bazaar cooks' stands may have been, for many reasons, of worse or much worse quality than the delicacies produced in any of the palatial kitchens. But the general rules of preparing the dishes were similar, if not indeed the same, particularly that most of the food cooked in Cairo of that time followed the so-called *Eintopf* style, or one-pot cookery.[246] The elite food was made of the domestically achievable variety of ingredients, so what mattered was the details—such as, for example, quantity, quality and multiplicity of spices added to a preparation, quality and quantity of meat or oil, quantity and quality of sugar, and quality of flour. And, additionally, the way the dishes were presented.

The offer of the Cairene street cooks, in some cases excellent and in others much below any acceptable standard, combined the items of the rich medieval Arab *haute cuisine* with a more modest, simplified (sometimes oversimplified) version of the latter. As such, the Cairene street cookery was doubtlessly not an example of high cooking. But by no means was it low cooking, either. In fact, to style it "urban" seems to be both correct and convenient.[247] As such, the Cairene menu, shared by various military and civilian elites and the city's population was, in fact, much more urban in nature than the new wave cuisine of Abbasid Baghdad. The latter, born in caliphs' kitchens and involving dishes such as that made of over 150

Abbasid house ... The activity then spread among the bourgeois sectors of Muslim society, creating 'great' written cooking tradition in Arabic distinct from the unrecorded practices of the plebeian population, both urban and rural;" "Dietetics," 231. While Waines's statement doubtlessly holds true for the Abbasid Baghdad, with its numerous nobles and men of letters concerned, for various reasons, about culinaria, it may be less valid for medieval Cairo.

[245] It was, rather, like in Ottoman Turkey, where only "few individual items in the cuisine of the Palace were beyond the scope of cooks in lesser households;" Raphaela Lewis, "Turkish Cuisine," *Oxford Symposium 1981, National and Regional Styles of Cookery. Proceedings* (London: Prospect Books, 1981), 120.

[246] This concerned both the situation when a ready meal was bought from the cook's stand to be taken away, as well as when the dish was prepared at home and carried to the street kitchen or communal oven to be cooked there. One should bear in mind that for the cook who had to cope with a shortage of fuel, who had only a one-burner kitchen at his disposal, and who had to produce a lot of hot food for several hours, one-pot cookery was the only possibility to prepare relatively complex dishes.

[247] See also above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 58–64. To complicate things somewhat, it may be added that the Cairene urban cookery corresponded, in a way, with Jack Goody's definition of the *haute cuisine*, whose development depends "upon a variety of dishes which are largely the inventions of specialists. But by no means entirely. For the higher cuisine also incorporates and transforms what ... is the regional food of peasants and the cooking of exotic foreigners;" Goody, *Cooking*, 104–5.

"fish tongues created in a fish's shape,"[248] was probably so extravagant as to be available for the privileged few only. And even if the privileged few of Baghdad were not restricted to court circles alone,[249] the range and number of consumers who could enjoy the tastes and smells of the Abbasid culinary nouvelle vogue did not compare to the range and number of those who enjoyed the conglomerate menu that the Cairene food culture produced. Unlike in the case of Baghdad, the street kitchens of Cairo were one of the most significant factors conditioning the city's private, social, and economic life. In other words, as the gastronomic "navel of the universe," Baghdad was comparable to Versailles of Louis XIV. Cairo was more like New York.

If, then, any general social barrier is to be marked in the context of the culinary culture of Cairo, it would probably be more proper to mark a divide not between food of the rich and food of the poor but, rather, between the food of the poor and that of the others. The poor refers here to the miserable army of unemployed and homeless. Indeed, the menu of the poor—most of whom earned their daily bread by begging—consisted mostly of various forms of salted fish (*ṣīr*, or *aṣ-ṣaḥnāt*, a paste made of *ṣīr*), river mussels (*ad-dallīnas*, *umm al-khulūl*),[250] and bread dipped in thin broth[251] and, as such, clearly stood out against the diet of the rest of the city. Apart from those few of its components that were adopted by, and adjusted to, the needs of the local *haute cuisine*,[252] the low-status foodstuffs were not shared by others and had no creative influence upon the culinary culture of Cairo. The leftovers from the tables of others and charity meals occasionally offered by the well-to-do were the only elements that bridged the gap between the world of the needy and the rest of the city.

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[248] Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 12.

[249] Cf. the words of David Waines, who maintains that "the new culinary culture was not confined to the court circles alone yet neither was it accessible to the lower classes;" Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 10.

[250] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 107, 197 (fols. 26*l*, 49*r*); Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 28; quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 367; see also Ashtor, "Essay," 141–3; Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam. Mamluk Egypt 1250–1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112–16.

[251] Ashtor, "Essay," 143. According to Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, the poor in Cairo remained calm because of the low price of bread and its abundance; Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 29. For bread "dipped in boiled vegetables and mixed with them," cf. Ashtor, "Essay," 143, quoting G.M. Vansleb, *Relazione dello stato presente dell'Egitto* (Paris, 1671), 235, who reports about the Egyptian poor eating a dish called "*ṭabīkh*" which consisted of vegetables mixed with a great quantity of bread. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 99, mentions that many "of the weak, including old men, the poor, and the young," ate what they bought at the colocasia seller's.

[252] For example, fish paste, colocasia, or fried cheese.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CAIRENE MENU: INGREDIENTS, PRODUCTS AND PREPARATIONS

The multiplicity of possible approaches implies that the foodstyle of a culture can be discussed in a number of ways, ranging from historical and economic to social and anthropological. In the case of the present study, two modes of presentation seemed to be more fitting than others. One involved following a nineteenth-century manual titled *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* which contains a huge set of instructions in the form of a complex questionnaire, meant to guide anthropologists in their field work. The questionnaire, proposed by a Committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and recently rediscovered by Peter Heine, covered all possible aspects of human life, food culture included.[1] The appropriate section, arranged according to areas such as "foodstuffs and their preparation," "presentation and storage of food," "cooking," "condiments," "prescribed and forbidden foods," "exceptional foods," etc., provides a researcher with convenient guidelines for investigation.[2]

Investigating a complex and multifaceted medieval Cairene food culture from the anthropologists' perspective means, however, depriving the study of its historical, political, and some of the social contexts. Besides, such an approach would inevitably involve countless repetitions. Cheese, for example, would have to be considered first in the category of foods that were eaten fresh, then of those that were cooked, then of those eaten cold, then of those eaten hot/warm. Furthermore, it should also be discussed in a section dealing with milk and forms of its preservation as well as in a section dealing with salted preserves—to mention only the most obvious of cheese's possible classifications. In effect, one might fail to discuss its varieties, its social standing, or its popularity as a menu item.

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[1] *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, ed. Committee of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (London: Routlege and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1951, 6th edition); discussed by Peter Heine, in "Middle Eastern Food. The Anthropologists' Perspective," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 159.

[2] The complex anthropological questionnaire stresses also the importance of questions related to food cultivation, food gathering, myths, taboos, rites, etc., or phenomena that are not meant to be a subject of the present study; see *Notes and Queries*, 241–57.

Another possible way of arranging the research would be to follow the order of some of the medieval Arabic cookery books. The recipes presented in Arabic cookbooks are often organized according to a similar scheme, though particular works differ in details. In the case of *Kitāb Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda* ("The Book of Description of Familiar Foods"), for example, the chapters include: 1. sour dishes (*ḥawāmiḍ*) and their varieties; 2. simple/plain dishes (*sawādhij*); 3. fried dishes (*qalāya*) and dry dishes (*nawāshif*); 4. porridges (*harāʾis*) and oven dishes (*tannūriyyāt*) 5. fried dishes (*muṭajjanāt*), cold dishes (*bawārid*), and samosas (*sanbūsik*); 6. fish (*samak*), both fresh and salted; 7. vinegar pickles (*mukhallāt*), relishes (*ṣabāʾigh*), and condiments (*muṭayyibāt*); 8. puddings (*jawādhib* and *akhbiṣa*); 9. sweetmeats (*ḥalawāt*); 10. pancakes (*qaṭāʾif*) and biscuits (*khushkanānaj*, etc.); 11. digestive beverages (*hāḍimāt*); 12. dishes for the sick and dishes eaten by the Christians during the Lent.[3]

Such an arrangement, apparently natural for the medieval Arab cooks and consumers, and probably attractive for an experimenter-cook of today as well, does not, however, seem to make much sense as a framework for research. Differentiating between the dishes according to their being or not being sour, and then, concurrently, dividing others according to the style of frying, etc., would not only confuse the reader, but also make it impossible for the researcher to make clear and systematic comments about a culinary culture which invented and practiced this approach.

At the same time, constructing the study according to chronological order was out of the question, if only because following the chronology of over five hundred years history of a complex culinary culture does not make much sense. Nor was it possible to apply the sociologically-oriented research questions suggested by Richard M. Mirsky in his "Perspectives in the Study of Food Habits."[4] Finally, organizing the study according to food courses was also unfeasible, as in the medieval Arabic-Islamic food culture there was generally no tradition of distinguishing between what we know as starters, soups, main courses, desserts, etc., let alone of serving meals according to different groups of foodstuffs.

Under such circumstances, the only way to make the inquiry and its presentation relatively clear and effective was to organize it according to

[3] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 302; *Wuṣla*, 903–35, and Rodinson's presentation of the contents of *Wuṣla* in "Studies," 100–1; 131–46; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 3–7 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 71–8); *Kanz*, 1–3. See also Perry's 'Concordance of recipes' in "Familiar Foods," 289–99.

[4] Mirsky, "Perspectives," 125–37.

main food categories. In other words, to combine the pattern applied in the food science with that which guides authors who write on the lore of the kitchen. In effect, the food of medieval Cairo will be discussed according to the following order:

1. Cereals:
   A. Millet and sorghum; B. Barley; C. Rice; D. Wheat[5]
2. Meat
3. Fowls and eggs
4. Fish
5. Dairy products
6. Vegetables and legumes
7. Fruits
8. Nuts and seeds
9. Flavorings:
   A. Salt; B. Sweetening agents; C. Souring agents; D. Oils and fats; E. Spices, herbs, fragrances; F. Prepared condiments

The scheme not only makes it possible to investigate in an orderly way what the ordinary Cairenes of the Middle Ages actually ate, but also to reveal various historical contexts of their menu. It also allows one to answer a number of questions which are so important from the anthropologists' perspective, such as whether a given substance was eaten fresh or raw, warm or cold, or whether it was customized to the local tastes and needs by means of drying, salting, fermenting, or preserving. Furthermore, such a scheme makes it possible to allude to the *batterie de cuisine* and the techniques of food preparation[6] and allows one to mention what was proscribed.

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[5] The present author realizes that the logic and the rules of this kind of schemes suggest that cereals are discussed together with other edible plants, or with seeds. The fact that the above scheme was organized according to culinary, and not botanical, terms should probably suffice as a justification of why this is not the case here.

[6] Both a detailed investigation of the techniques of food preparation and the presentation of *batterie de cuisine* exceed the scope of the present study, and no separate section is devoted to these questions. The techniques applied in the Arabic-Islamic medieval cuisine are discussed in Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 65–112; for chemical and physical aspects of cooking, as well as of food science and technology in general, see Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen* (New York: Scribner, 2004); appropriate entries in Alan Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Prosper Montagné, *New Larousse Gastronomique* (London: Hamlyn, 1983). Also Michael Abdalla, *Kultura żywienia dawnych i współczesnych Asyryjczyków* (Warszawa:

Wherever the names of plants or fishes may raise doubts or be considered confusing, Latin names of species are given.

1. Cereals[7]

A. *Millet and Sorghum*

Arabic sources agree as to the presence and consumption of wheat, barley, and rice in medieval Egypt. Only millet (*dukhn*) arouses some controversy.[8] According to ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, millet was entirely unknown in Egypt except in the uppermost part of Ṣaʿīd where it was cultivated. However, according to al-ʿUmarī millet was one of the most popular Egyptian cereals.[9] But al-Baghdādī antedated al-ʿUmarī by over a century, which allows one to suppose that during this period millet either started to be imported from the Upper Egypt to the Delta area, or came to be grown in the Lower Egypt as well. At the same time, Ibn Iyās clearly confirms that the consumption of millet was in fact rather unusual in Cairo: in his annal for 875/1470–71, the chronicler noted that when food prices increased that year and bread disappeared from the markets, people started to eat bread made of millet and sorghum. According to Ibn Iyās, such a situation did not happen before, even in the period of *ghalāʾ* (dearth or, more literally "[period of] inflated prices") which occurred during the days of al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (842–857/1438–1453), when for an *irdabb*[10] of wheat one

Dialog, 2001), *passim*. For a concise presentation of the Arabic-Islamic medieval *batterie de cuisine* see Ahsan, *Social Life*, 120–30; Hanna, "Cuisine," 408–9; Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 17–23; Perry, "Familiar Foods," 285–6; Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 16–18; *EI2*, VI, "Maṭbakh" (1. In the medieval caliphate) by idem; Marín, "Pots and Fire," 292–301; Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 399–402; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī*, 79–84.

[7] The present chapter discusses cereals as food items only. For the use of cereal grains for production of beverages see below, pt. II, chapters II.1. "Drinks of the Mamluks," and II.2. "Beer of Egyptians."

[8] The millets are a group of small-seeded species of cereal crops or grains. The millets do not form a taxonomic group but, rather, a functional or agronomic one. I have not been able to define whether medieval Egyptian *dukhn* belonged to *Panicum* species or was it rather the so-called "pearl millet," *Pennisetum glaucum*, today widely cultivated in the Sudanic Africa. For confusing synonymies of millet, sorghum, maize and durra see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 494. See also Toufic Fahd's discussion on the sources for studies on Arabic botany and agriculture, where *dukhn* is translated as "rye" ("Botanika i rolnictwo," in *Historia nauki arabskiej. 3. Technika, alchemia, nauki przyrodnicze i medycyna*, ed. R. Rashed (Warszawa: Dialog, 2005), 85.

[9] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 69 (fol. 17*r*); al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83.

[10] One *irdabb* equaled about 70 kilograms. See Hinz, *Masse*, 39; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 235.

had to pay seven Ashrafī dinars.[11] All in all, millet, if used in Cairo at all, was most probably fed generally to animals, and not to people and, as such, is not of great importance for the present study.[12]

Sorghum (*dhurra*; *Sorghum* L.), although also generally avoided by the Cairenes, deserves more attention. Like millet, it apparently was one of the crops particular to the Upper Egypt. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī saw it being cultivated, together with millet, in the uppermost parts of Ṣaʿīd.[13] This was confirmed by Ibn al-Athīr who, in his annal for 568/1260, mentioned that "*dhurra* was the food of the Nubians."[14] Generally disfavored by the urban population of the Egyptian capital, sorghum was, however, appreciated in the periods of famine or economic hardship. With wheat beyond their reach, people definitely preferred sorghum to all other substitutes for wheat, such as millet, broad beans, or bran, all of which were used in making "emergency bread." In the crisis year of 892/1486–7, sorghum became so commonplace that people immortalized the cereal in a chant to which they danced: "My hubby—what a laughing stock he is—feeds me with sorghum bread!"[15] Indeed, the quantities of sorghum imported that year to Cairo were so huge that its surplus finally caused the decrease of wheat prices. But, contrary to what Ibn Iyās maintains, sorghum bread had been consumed in Cairo before. In fact, according to his own chronicle, there were at least three more incidents in previous years when people were forced to replace regular wheat bread with bad sorghum bread.[16]

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[11] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, III, 47; for the discussion on the notion of *ghalāʾ* see Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 7–12. For details on the so-called "Ashrafī" dinar and dirham, or coins struck by sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy, see Popper, *Egypt and Syria*, II, 49–50; 58–9.

[12] It should be noted, however, that in his treatise on dietetics al-Isrāʾīlī nevertheless discusses medical advantages and disadvantages of *dukhn*, as well as the ways of cooking it; see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 226–7.

[13] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 69 (fol. 17*r*). For detailed comments regarding the presence of sorghum in ancient Egypt see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 494–5.

[14] Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 45–6.

[15] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, III, 237–8.

[16] See the annal for 775/1373–4, where Ibn Iyās recorded that the exceptionally high prices of wheat forced people to eat bread made of *dhurra* and of bran (*nukhāl*) (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 125); and the annal for 776/1374–5 or the year when most people ate bread made of broad beans, bran, and *dhurra* (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 140; also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 235); and the already mentioned annal for the year 875/1470–71 when people ate bread made of millet and sorghum (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, III, 47). For additional comments relating to the inclusion of sorghum into the diet of the Cairenes see Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 172–3. For details regarding the declining Egyptian agriculture, shortage of grain, and it rising prices see also: Eliyahu Ashtor, "Prix et salaries a l'époque

B. *Barley*

Of wheat, rice, and barley, or the most popular cereals of medieval Lower Egypt, barley (*shaʿīr; Hordeum vulgare*) may have been the oldest cereal to grow in the Nile valley. Very much in demand in ancient Egypt, where it was given to both man and beast, with time barley began to lose its position as one of the staple food items of the local population.[17] Moreover, from ca. fourth century C.E. it also ceased to be the grain of the Egyptian brewing industry.[18] Never giving up its dominant position as fodder, by the Middle Ages barley continued to be the most sought-after grain for thousands of the Cairene garrisons' mounts.[19] At the same time, however, it became the least important cereal for the humans. S.D. Goitein stressed that as far as the Geniza documentation was concerned, barley was completely absent from the table of the urban population.[20] His assertion proved to be valid not only for the Fusṭāṭi Jews but for Cairenes in general as well. Indeed, barley flour, if used in bread production at all, seems to have been nothing more than an unwanted admixture added to wheat flour by dishonest millers.[21] Barley, like rye, produces hard, heavy loaves unless wheat flour is added. Discarded as bread ingredient, barley was not, however, completely useless in the food preparation. An fifth/eleventh-century medical treatise reveals that barley was used for making the so-called *kishk* (crushed grain mixed with yoghurt and then dried in the sun) and *sawīq* (a meal of parched grain, made into a kind of gruel, to which

mamlouke. Une étude sur l'état économique de l'Egypte et de la Syrie à la fin du moyen âge," *REI* (1949): 54–63; idem, *Levant Trade*, 433–512, *passim*; also Shoshan, "Grain Riots," 465–73; Lev, "Regime," 150–61.

[17] The exact historical period in which barley was set aside is unclear. This could occur during the New Kingdom when, according to H. Kees (*Ancient Egypt. A Cultural Topography* /London, 1961/, 74, quoted in Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 487), barley was supplanted by wheat as the chief grain of the land, or at some point in the Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic epoch when another change in the cereal crops of Egypt took place; cf. Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 479–87; and Crawford "Food," 140.

[18] In the fourth century C.E. barley beer, produced in Egypt from Pharaonic times, almost disappears from the documentation, replaced by wine; see Bagnall, *Egypt*, 32.

[19] On the Mamluk army's demand for barley see David Ayalon, "The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society," *JESHO* 1 (1957–58): 261–2. Apart from barley, also broad beans, clover, as well as hay and straw were fed to mounts and farm animals.

[20] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 243. Elsewhere, however, Goitein indicates that barley, apart from being used as fodder, served also "as bread for the very poor;" *Economic Foundations*, 118.

[21] See, for example, ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 21 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 46); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 21; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 157.

was added water and butter or fat from the tails of sheep). Nevertheless, it seems that Cairenes preferred to make both products from wheat.[22]

Indeed, culinary preparations in which barley was valued as an ingredient were rather few. In its rotten form, barley grains were indispensable for making condiments such as *murrī*, a "soy sauce" of the medieval Arabic-Islamic cuisine, made of rotted barley in a complicated and time-consuming process, and *kāmakh aḥmar*, the production of which required pounding the grains and kneading them with salt and fresh milk. Left in the sun until browned and then seasoned with spices, *kāmakh aḥmar* was served with bread.[23]

C. *Rice*

In his article on rice in the culinary cultures of the Middle East, Sami Zubaida observed that "until recent times, rice was considered a luxury food, for the tables of the rich and for special occasions in most parts of the region."[24] Whatever its validity for individual areas of the region and for particular periods of their history,[25] the view seems to harmonize with what has been observed in reference to Egypt and Cairo of the Middle Ages. Such observations include, for example, Amalia Levanoni's remark that rice belonged to foodstuffs which were considered symbols of social status by the Cairenes, and a firm comment by Eliahu Ashtor who maintains that in regions other than Mesopotamian Lower Babylonia (where rice was cultivated and was a staple cereal) rice dishes remained luxury items, while rice itself was by no means within the reach of the working

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[22] Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 132. For medical usefulness of barley see also al-Isrā'ili, *Aghdhiya*, 216–23; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XI, 15; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 275, where barley porridge (*ḥasw shaʿīr*) is mentioned as a medicine. On barley in ancient Egyptian and Greek therapeutics see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 484–5.

For the most detailed description of *sawīq* see *EI2*, IX, "Sawīḳ" by D. Waines; for recipes see al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 37–8 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 126–7) which, however, describe *sawīq* made of wheat. Cf. entry "Sawīq" in Lane, *Lexicon*, 1472. For *kishk* see below, chapter II.5. "Dairy products," pp. 229–30.

[23] For more on *murrī* and *kāmakh* see below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," pp. 340–1.

[24] Sami Zubaida, "Rice in the Culinary Cultures of the Middle East," in *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, ed. Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (London, New York: Tauris Parke, 2000), 93.

[25] See, for example, *EI2*, VIII, "Al-Ruzz" by D. Waines, where the author observes that in the areas where it was cultivated, such as the southern parts of Iraq and Khūzistān, rice (or, more precisely, rice bread) was the staple of the poor. Also Heine, *Kulinarische Sudien*, 40.

masses. This was supposedly applicable to Egypt as well—despite the fact that Ashtor points out elsewhere that by the Middle Ages rice was "abundant" in that country.[26] But was rice indeed a luxury food for the tables of the rich throughout the centuries of its presence in the Cairene menu?

Actually, the medieval sources are not particularly rich in records documenting rice cultivation in Egypt. Rice (*aruzz; Oryza sativa* L.), which arrived there only in the course of the process referred to as the "Arab agricultural revolution," was the newest of the locally grown cereals.[27] No traces of it were ever positively identified either in Pharaonic or Hellenistic Egyptian remains.[28] From at least the fourth/tenth century rice was grown in the oases, in the Fayyum area, and in the Ṣaʿīd.[29] There is no reason to assume, however, that rice fields covered any significant part of these areas. Moreover, the episodic character of historical references to rice allows one to suspect that the cultivation of rice in Egypt in the pre-Fatimid and the Fatimid epoch could hardly have exceeded what might be called an experimental level. The post-Fatimid sources are not much more informative regarding the cultivation of rice. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī (the sixth-seventh/twelfth-thirteenth centuries) does not discuss it at all, while al-ʿUmarī (the eighth/fourteenth century) simply mentions its name among other edible plants cultivated in Egypt. So does Ibn Ẓahīra (the ninth/fifteenth century), who additionally stresses the exceptionally good quality of Egyptian wheat, barley, rice and broad beans.[30] Oddly enough, al-Maqrīzī does not mention rice at all, even though he devoted part of his *Khiṭaṭ* to a discussion of the crops of Egypt.[31]

The first more detailed information on rice cultivation in Egypt dates back to the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century and is included in

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[26] See Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 209; Ashtor, "Diet," 126–7.

[27] In contemporary Egypt, "most of the native varieties are round-grained, like Italian or some Spanish rice;" Zubaida, "Rice," 94–5. I have not been able to define, however, what variety prevailed in Egypt of the Middle Ages.

[28] Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 492–3. Rice seems to have been first cultivated in Asia, somewhere between southern China and Cochinchina. It became known early in Babylon, where it was given the Aramaic name *ourouzza*. Darby, loc.cit.

[29] Ibn Riḍwān (the fourth-fifth/tenth-eleventh centuries), "Treatise" in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 84 (and 6a of the Arabic text); al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 201, 203, 208; Ibn Ḥawqal (the fourth/tenth century), *Kitāb Sūrat al-Arḍ*, I, 136, 137. For the way rice was cultivated in the medieval Middle/Near East see, for example, Marius Canard, "Le riz dans le Proche Orient aux premieres siecles de l'Islam," *Arabica* 6 (1959): 120. Basing on the words of D. Müller-Wodarg, Canard maintains that rice existed in Egypt already before the Islamic era; "Riz," 118.

[30] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83; Ibn Ẓahīra, *Faḍāʾil*, 185.

[31] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 100–3.

the travel account of Leo Africanus. According to his observations, rice cultivation was quite widespread in the Delta, particularly in Anthius of the Rosetta area, where inhabitants "had a custom to carry rice to Cairo and gain a high and excellent profit on it," in Thebes, and in Barnabal. In Barnabal rice was exceptionally abundant, so much so that the Berber rice threshers who worked there earned enough to enjoy the services of "almost all the prostitutes of Egypt." The latter came to town in great numbers, attracted by the vision of stripping rice threshers of their earnings.[32]

As for the records documenting the consumption of rice in the al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo area, those dating back to the Fatimid epoch are indeed very few. Probably the earliest of them is to be found in *Kitāb al-Aghdhiya wa-l-Adwiya*, a dietary treatise by Isḥāq al-Isrāʾīlī (the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries). Apart from quoting Galen's remarks on the cereal, his short section on rice contains fragments which seem to be al-Isrāʾīlī's own comments. These discuss the preparation of rice with milk and sugar, the ways of cooking rice, as well as the comparison of rice to dried cakes of

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[32] The quotations from: L'Africain, *Description*, 490, 499, 500. For identification of Anthius, Barnabal and Thebes see Brémond, *Voyage*, 39, nn. 176–178. It is not clear if Gabriel Brémond (in Egypt in 1643–45) paraphrased Leo Africanus's words referring to Barnabal or had similar experiences indeed; nevertheless, according to him, too, there was a lot of rice in Barnabal, and women there were "dissolute and easily prostituted themselves; Brémond, *Voyage*, 39.

According to Norden (in Egypt in 1730s) the operation of threshing the rice consisted in treading the grain, laid on the ground in a ring, "by means of a sledge, drawn by two oxen." Norden, *Travels*, I, 50–1, and plate XXX. From Norden's description it is not clear whether this was done in order to remove the husk only, or also to "polish" rice by removing the outer layer or bran off the grain. Actually, the process of polishing deprives the grain of many vitamins and minerals contained in the outer layer coating. At the same time, however, the proteins of polished rice are more available than those in unpolished rice. Polished rice also keeps better than brown rice. Interestingly, Anselme Adorno (in Egypt in 1470–1471), while describing the Rosetta region across which he passed on his way to Cairo, observed that rice, apparently a popular element of the local diet, was eaten unhusked; Adorno, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte (1470–1471)*, trans. and ed. Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1978), 175. Whether this means that in the country rice grain was prepared with husks and bran, or that the chaff was removed only partly so as to produce brown rice, is difficult to assert. Be that as it may, the standards of the urban culinary culture apparently differed from those of the Delta villages. In Cairo, as in the cookbooks, rice was supposed to be white. For the possible use of salt for whitening the rice grains see a comment in Ibrahim Kh. Geries, *Literary and Gastronomical Conceit*, 96. The doubts raised by Geries regarding the whitening of rice with salt may be resolved by Lizzie Collingham, according to whom "the Persians would soak the rice in salted water for many hours to ensure that, when it was cooked, the grains were gleaming white, providing a striking contrast to colored grains that ranged from coal black to yellow, blue, green and red;" Collingham, *Curry*, 26.

grains and yoghurt called *kishk*.[33] Another Fatimid era source to refer to rice consumption is the chronicle written by the Fatimid *wazīr* Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾiḥī (the sixth/twelfth century). One can learn from it that provisions allotted to certain official included, apart from sugar, honey, rose jam, vinegar, and various kinds of nuts and oils, also half a *wayba*[34] of rice. And that the son of the official was entitled, apart from mutton and bread, also to a plate of rice with milk and sugar.[35] It should be kept in mind, however, that al-Isrāʾīlī's medically-oriented theoretical comments relate to undefined circumstances, while the data provided by Ibn al-Maʾmūn refer to the very limited circle of the Fatimid milieu. Consequently, it is not possible to use these authors' information, however valuable, to establish whether rice was eaten by the ordinary urbanites in any noteworthy quantities or not.

In fact, the only source to cast some light on the actual consumption of rice in al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo of the Fatimid epoch is probably the *ḥisba* manual written by ash-Shayzarī. It confirms the availability of rice in the market in two ways. The author's direct mention of rice refers to it as to the grain which, when milled to flour, was used by bakers to adulterate wheat flour, because rice flour "made bread heavy."[36] The logic behind this kind of swindle is obvious in the case of barley, broad beans, chickpeas, etc., or grains and legumes that were much cheaper than wheat and that, milled to flour, were sometimes added to wheat flour by dishonest dealers. But if rice was indeed as costly as it is sometimes believed to have been, how could the adding of rice flour to wheat flour turn out to be profitable? One of the possible answers is that rice flour was a particularly efficient adulterating agent. The other possibility—which does not exclude the former—is that rice in Cairo was not always as costly as it is sometimes believed to have been, at least not in the late sixth/twelfth century.

By indicating that dishes sold by the street cooks included dishes presumably made of rice, ash-Shayzarī's manual seems to confirm the hypothesis—albeit in an indirect and vague way. These dishes included *labaniyya,* a dish which could be made of meat and leeks or onions

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[33] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 224–5. For comments on rice made from the point of view of the humoral medicine see also an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XI, 23.

[34] It is not absolutely clear whether in the sixth/twelfth century a *wayba* equaled 12.168 kilograms or 11.6 kilograms; see Hinz, *Masse*, 52; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 235.

[35] Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 66, 67.

[36] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 23 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 47).

cooked in yoghurt together with pounded rice,[37] and *bahaṭa*, also called *muḥallabiyya*, the preparation made, according to some recipes, of rice, fat meat boiled with coriander, mastic, sticks of cinnamon, syrup or sugar and, according to others, of milk, pounded rice, and sugar.[38] Obviously, two rice dishes in the entire street offer is not much. However, a market inspector's manual was not supposed to be an index to the cook shops' production, and it is quite possible that their offer actually included some more rice preparations.

Other sources are not much helpful in defining the position of rice in the local menu. The Jewish Geniza documents do not seem to point to a particularly high demand for or consumption of this crop in al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo area. However, the existence of the House of Rice (Dār al-Aruzz) or a toll house in al-Fusṭāṭ, which was a storehouse and a bourse for the sale of rice all in one,[39] may suggest relatively high sales of rice. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, an otherwise keen observer of Egyptian foodstuffs and edible plants of the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, mentions rice only once, as an ingredient of fish preparations consumed by the people of Damietta.[40] Nevertheless, his account is remarkable, as the people whose meal ʿAbd al-Laṭīf observed in Damietta were not the local privileged few but quite ordinary members of the local population, possibly fishermen who would not go for expensive foodstuffs. All in all, the above-discussed records, ambiguous as they are, seem to indicate that rice was not the principal cereal grain consumed in Egypt of the Fatimid and Ayyubid epochs. But they also show it was not a food item exclusively for the elite.

Whatever the true role of rice in the Cairene menu of the pre-Mamluk era, the increase of both the quantity and quality of references to this cereal in the literature of the Mamluk epoch may point to the increase of its

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[37] *Labaniyya* was seasoned with cumin, garlic, mastic and Chinese cinnamon (*Kanz*, 37–8, n. 74; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 31a) or, according to another version, with mastic, Ceylon cinnamon and mint (*Kanz*, 41, n. 87; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 10b). It seems, however, that rice was not an indispensable ingredient in *labaniyya* dish: in yet another version bread crumbs were used instead of rice (*Kanz*, 270, n. A19) while the recipe included in *Waṣf* (in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 322) calls neither for rice, nor for bread.

[38] See recipes for *muḥallabiyya/bahaṭa* in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 55, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 50; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 335, 361–2, 367, 447; *Kanz*, 46–7, nn. 105, 106; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 11b; *Wuṣla*, 591. On *muḥallabiyya* see also *EI2*, VIII, "Al-Ruzz" by D. Waines.

[39] Dār al-Aruzz was located "in the neighborhood of buildings belonging to a Muslim judge, a Christian innkeeper, and two Jewish ladies near the great thoroughfare of the bazaar of the oil-makers;" Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 119, 195.

[40] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 199 (fol. 49*l*).

role in the local culinary culture. As for literary fiction, two works deserve particular consideration. One is *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-ʿAbūs*, translated into English as *The Diversion of the Souls, Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face*,[41] a collection of prose and verse written by ʿAlī Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī (the ninth/fifteenth century). Densely interwoven with allusions to food, the work includes one short anecdote devoted to rice. It reflects the appreciation for the versatility of rice and its "graciousness" or "patience" as a food ingredient.[42] Also, it names and describes a number of dishes which, different though they are, call for rice. There appears "rice made with milk," called *aruzz al-laban*, a dish which the cookery books feature as rice cooked in milk seasoned with Chinese cinnamon and mastic.[43] There is *judhāba*, otherwise a popular plate of the *Arabian Nights*, here described as rice with stock and milk[44] but in its original form a sophisticated dish consisting of a sort of sweet pudding baked in the oven under the roasting meat to catch its running fat and juices. According to Charles Perry, roasted meat, although served separately, constituted a part of this dish.[45] And there is also *aruzz mufalfal*, another favorite of the *Nights*. Generally, *aruzz mufalfal* was made of rice seasoned with

[41] See above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 6. "Works of fiction and *adab*," p. 56.

[42] "Law kāna ar-ruzz rajulan, la-kāna ḥalīman," reads the saying quoted by Ibn Sūdūn; Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, in Vrolijk, *Scowling Face*, 72. The same saying is quoted in ash-Shirbīnī's *Hazz al-Quhūf*; see H.T. Davies, *Yūsuf al-Shirbīnī's Kitāb Hazz al-Quḥūf bi-Sharḥ Qaṣīd Abī Shādūf ("Brains Confounded by the Ode of Abū Shādūf Expounded")*. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 141 (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 359. See also a commentary to the saying by Geries, *Literary and Gastronomical Conceit*, 94. On rice dishes mentioned by Ibn Sūdūn see Marín, "Literatura," 142–3.

[43] Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, in Vrolijk, *Scowling Face*, 72; for recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 367; *Kanz*, 47, n. 108, 271, n. 23; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 10b, 32a; *Wuṣla*, 594; cf. also ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 349–50, where rice with milk made "à la Turk" is described.

[44] Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, in Vrolijk, *Scowling Face*, 72. Cf. Gonzales's description of rice "cooked in the goat or cow milk and with juice of meat," which was "particularly digestible and tasteful" (Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 513–14) and which unavoidably brings to mind the oversimplified *judhāba* as described by Ibn Sūdūn; Gonzales (in Egypt in 1665–6) considered the dish good for sensitive stomach and an antidote against hemorrhage and dysentery.

[45] Charles Perry, "What to Order in Ninth-Century Baghdad," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 219–21. For description of *judhāba* by Abbasid poets see Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 33–34. For recipes for rice *judhāba* see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 358; *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha* in Perry, "*Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*: Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 471. Baking *judhāba* under meat in the oven was apparently not always obligatory to prepare the dish; see, for example, the recipe for chicken *jawādhib* in *Kanz*, 27, n. 44; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 8b. For *jawādhib* made without rice see below, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 97; and II.7. "Fruits," pp. 281, 285.

Chinese cinnamon and mastic, optionally colored with saffron, with pieces of meat (stewed in sheep's tail fat melted with spices) arranged on top of it.[46] In the anecdote in question, however, it is described as "rice made with geese and chicken stock, and with sheep's tail fat and fat poured on it."[47] Furthermore, Ibn Sūdūn mentions a dish of "rice made with sugar water, or molasses, or Egyptian honey, or date molasses." The simple preparation, called "*al-ʿazīzī*," seems to have been a much favored delicacy. While evaluating the real fondness for this dish—"the most dear of all the rice preparations"[48]—one should, however, be aware of the biased nature of Ibn Sūdūn's attitude towards food and, particularly, of his predilection for sweets typical for a hashish addict.

Whatever caution the views of Ibn Sūdūn may require if used to indicate the general taste preferences of Cairenes, no similar care is necessary with other messages transmitted in the anecdote. First, the text clearly indicates that rice dishes consumed in the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo had little to do with these dishes' sophisticated prototypes, praised many centuries earlier in the Abbasid court poetry and documented in the recipes created in the courtly setting of Baghdad. At the same time, the oversimplified versions of *aruzz mufalfal* and *judhāba* as depicted in the anecdote demonstrate how wide the gap was between what the cookery books recommended and what was promoted by the actual cooking practice.

Doubtless by the end of the Mamluk era, the art of cooking was in decline, both in the sultans' kitchens and in the city streets.[49] If, however, in the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo *judhāba* was indeed degraded to a dish of rice with stock and milk, it also means that it was an item of the popular, rather than elite, menu. Although it is difficult to define explicitly whether the oversimplification of rice dishes was the effect or the reason of the popularization of rice, Ibn Sūdūn's anecdote contradicts the opinion

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[46] Despite of what its name may suggest, *mufalfal* rice was not "peppered rice" but rice "cooked by the pilaf method of careful washing followed by boiling and then steaming so that every grain ends up separate;" Perry, "Thousand and One 'Fritters'," 491. For *mufalfal*, or pilaf method see also Zubaida, "Rice," 94–7; and Montagné, *New Larousse Gastronomique*, 699–700. For recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 52, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 46–7; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 332; *Kanz*, 274, n. A33; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 12a, 32b; *Wuṣla*, 592–3; *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 472.

[47] Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs*, in Vrolijk, *Scowling Face*, 72.

[48] Ibid., 72.

[49] Thesis formulated by Dreher, "Regard," 80–82. In fact, *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, a ninth/fifteenth-century Damascene cookbook, defined by Perry as "a modest version of medieval Arab cookery," may be used to confirm the correctness of Dreher's opinion.

quoted earlier, which defined rice as a medieval luxury food item. This does not mean, however, that rice was not appreciated anymore. Simplified and devoid of all the old refinement, degraded from both the culinary and social point of view, rice preparations in the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo could still be liked and valued. After all, stock, milk, or date molasses go quite well with rice indeed.

"The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," or one of the Cairene stories of the *Arabian Nights* collection, shows rice dishes from the perspective of the lower end of the social ladder. As the main plot of the tale has it, Jūdar, a poor fisherman, happens to get access to the magic bag of a certain Maghrebian necromancer. The bag, like the horn of plenty, could supply its owner with food, and among the delicacies which Jūdar could get from it were rice with honey and *mufalfal* rice. Very much like roasted chicken, stuffed lamb or sweets, these two preparations were what hungry people dreamt of, apparently knowing their appearances and smells from the cooks' shops located along the city streets and bazaars. However, to be out of reach for those with no means was not necessarily synonymous with being a luxury food item. "The Tale of Jūdar" seems to be far from confirming that the consumption of dishes like rice with honey or *mufalfal* rice was limited only to the circles of the privileged and well-to-do. Instead, it reveals the Cairenes' fondness of rice dishes, of which rice with honey and *mufalfal* rice were perhaps the most popular.

The message coming from the non-fiction literature supports similar conclusions. Basically, the data provided by such literature is of four kinds. One involves annalistic notes routinely recorded by chroniclers such as al-Maqrīzī or Ibn Iyās, and dealing with fluctuations of prices that occurred in Egypt on various occasions.[50] The second consists of the *ḥisba* treaties, known as the manuals for the market inspectors, which present the food business as practiced in the city streets and bazaars. The third kind of data is that included in the cookbooks, used here primarily for cross-reference and as a source of information on trends and phenomena most likely applicable to the culinary culture of medieval Cairo. And finally, there is Khalīl aẓ-Ẓāhirī's *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik*, a "picture of Egypt under the Mamluks" which includes a long list of royal Mamluk dishes.

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[50] For an excellent and well-documented survey of food prices in late medieval Egypt see Popper, *Egypt and Syria*, II, 80–106. See also Ashtor, "Diet," tables on 141; idem, "Prix," 63–73; idem, "Coût," 57–60. In none of these studies, however, rice is taken into consideration.

To start with the last, the list of Khalīl aẓ-Ẓāhirī (the ninth/fifteenth century), often quoted as an important source of data on "Mamluk food," was presented by its author as a list of "dishes prepared in the sultan's kitchens."[51] It is probably worth stressing, however, that such a royal qualification of food was not, in the Cairene context, tantamount with the "palace cuisine" designation. In other words, such a qualification did not imply that the preparations styled this way were unknown to the ordinary people.[52] Therefore, the list is used here as an index to preparations which, quite probably, were also consumed by an average, middle-class inhabitant of the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo and which, at the same time, presumably contained rice. The latter seems to refer to seven out of the total forty two dishes included in aẓ-Ẓāhirī's list.

One of them, the famous *aruzz mufalfal*, was already discussed above. In the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture, *maʾmūniyya*, a dish allegedly named after the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833), was almost as famous. Made of boiled chicken, pounded rice cooked in milk, syrup, and sheep's tail fat, it was usually scented with musk and sometimes also with rose-water and camphor.[53] Apart from these two preparations, aẓ-Ẓāhirī's list includes also: *khayṭiyya*, made of lean meat boiled with mastic and cinnamon, then fried into fibers, then boiled together with pounded rice, and served with syrup or honey;[54] *narjīsiyya*, made of fat meat boiled with onions, carrots and rice, seasoned with spices and melted sheep's tail fat, and covered with egg yolk and egg whites;[55] *fuqqāʿiyya*, made of meat

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[51] For more on the source see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 3. "Chronicles and annalistic sources," pp. 46–7.

[52] Cf. above, chapter I.5. "Customers," pp. 129–31.

[53] For detailed discussion on the dish see Maxime Rodinson, "*Maʾmūniyya* East and West," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 185–97; for recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 316 (in another recipe, in ibid., 425, semolina is used instead of rice); *Wuṣla*, 618–20; *Kanz*, 271, n. A22; *maʾmūniyya* dishes featured in the recipes included in *Kanz*, 35, n. 67 and 37, n. 71 were non-meat preparations; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 10b, 36b.

[54] *Khayṭiyya* might be also called *ʿursiyya* which, in turn, was also called *harīsat al-aruzz*; see recipes in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69; and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 72–3; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 335 and 367; *Kanz*, 270, n. A18; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 9a (where one of the two recipes for *khayṭiyya* does not call for rice), 10a, 11b, 30a.

[55] Optionally, some meatballs could be added; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 61, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 60–1; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 349; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 32a (a recipe in fol. 35b involves a version with no rice). A recipe in ibid., fol. 11a, and in *Kanz*, 43, n. 95, recommends preparing the dish with a little bit of pepper and Syrian cheese; *Wuṣla*, 575–6. Cf. the appropriate recipe in *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 475.

cooked with onions, Swiss chard, spices, mint, rue, little rice, and soured with lemon juice;[56] and *labaniyya*, a dish of meat and leeks or onions cooked in yoghurt together with pounded rice.[57] *Summāqiyya*, a dish made of fat meat, leeks, fried eggplant, walnuts, almonds, and *ṭaḥīna*, spiced with Chinese cinnamon, mastic, coriander, and mint, soured with sumac, could optionally contain rice.[58]

In terms the Arabic-Islamic culinary theory, some of the rice preparations, such as *fuqqāʿiyya* and *summāqiyya*, belonged to the *ḥawāmiḍ*, or sour dishes category. A significant number of the savory rice preparations, however, were *sawādhij*, that is "plain" or non-sour dishes. Apart from regular meat and chicken preparations cooked in the pot, rice was also relatively often used for making the so-called *tannūriyyāt*, or "oven dishes."[59] These included, for example, the already discussed *aruzz al-laban* and *judhāba*, as well as *sukhtūr*, a kind of sausage stuffed with meat, rice, chickpeas and seasoned with Chinese cinnamon, mastic, and other spices.[60] *Ibrinj mājānī*, a complicated Persian preparation made of sheep's heads and trotters, scented with Chinese cinnamon and mastic, and made with chickpeas and rice cooked in pilaf style, was also cooked in the *tannūr* oven.[61]

As a perfectly universal ingredient, rice matched not only savory but also sweet tastes. Sweet rice plates were extremely simple, but nevertheless much favored preparations. They were generally made of rice cooked in water and mixed (or covered) with sweet ingredient—be it sugar, honey, or molasses. Meatless, usually spiceless and fat-free, with sweetener as their only extra ingredient, they could not be expensive, particularly if sweetened with date molasses. The presumably attractive price could have added to their popularity. The most famous of them was probably *ʿaṣīda*, an unpretentious, rural-style preparation made of flour,

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[56] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 317; *Kanz*, 42, n. 91.

[57] Already mentioned above in the context of the *ḥisba* manual by ash-Shayzarī, pp. 142–3.

[58] Of many recipes for *summāqiyya* actually only one, that given in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 312, calls for rice.

[59] In the medieval Arabic cookery books, the recipes which call for rice are scattered throughout the volumes. *Wuṣla* is probably the only example of this kind of literature in which an entire chapter is devoted to rice preparations (*Wuṣla*, 591–95). For a convenient survey of the Arabic-Islamic medieval rice dishes see Canard, "Riz," 125–9; see also *EI2*, VIII, "Al-Ruzz" by D. Waines.

[60] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 70, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 73–4; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368–70.

[61] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 373.

rice and sesame oil, covered with honey or syrup and sprinkled with nuts.[62] Due to its nourishing values the composition seems to have been one of the favorite local fares to be consumed during cold days.[63] Its porridge-like consistency became proverbial and, although the recipes for the dish itself are missing from majority of the cookery books, it is often cited in other recipes as an example of proper thickness.

Washed, dried, and picked over before cooking, rice was indeed a very "patient" (to use Ibn Sūdūn's expression) and universal ingredient and could be used in a wide variety of preparations and employed in a variety of ways. From what the medieval recipes say, rice could be thrown onto the top of the contents of the pot either in the last stage of cooking or in the middle of it. It could also be added, in its grain or pounded form, to the boiled meat and then cooked with it. It could be also powdered and cooked, after which chicken was thrown on top of it, or could be left to moisten with milk and then stewed with chicken meat. It could be made into meatballs with pounded chickpeas, or made into sausages, or pounded into rice groats. When pounded fine, it could be used as a thickening agent or made into pudding.

It could be either cooked close to softness, with each separate grain very slightly bite-resistant (i.e. *mufalfal*, or cooked as for pilaf), or allowed to be saturated with water to the point when it becomes soft and fluffy. It could be cooked in water, stock, milk, or yoghurt, or, following the Turkish manner, fried in clarified butter, then dried, ground, and then kneaded with sugar and clarified butter.[64] It usually complemented chickpeas, meat, and chicken. As for cooking rice with fish, an explicit answer cannot be provided. On the one hand, the Damietta fish-and-rice dishes noticed by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī or similar dishes eaten in Iraq[65]

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[62] See also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 248. Cf. definition of *ʿaṣīda* as given in Lane, *Lexicon*, 2060 where it is described as "wheat-flour moistened and stirred about with clarified butter, and cooked." In an attempt to transform the rural dish into a refined courtly dainty, an amateur cook prepared *ʿaṣīda* of the *qaṭāʾif* pancakes which, macerated in rose-water, were made through the strainer. The resulting pulp, mixed with honey, syrup, saffron, pistachios, musk, and rose-water, made a dish which he called "*ʿaṣīdat al-khulafāʾ*," or "*ʿaṣīda* of the caliphs;" see *Wuṣla*, 663. See also recipes for *ʿaṣīda* in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 89; and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 106; *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 473.

[63] See al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 91 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

[64] As in the recipes for *qāwūt* in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 423, 464. Of the two recipes for *qāwūt* included in Ibn Mubārak Shāh's *Zahr*, none calls for rice.

[65] For references to rice consumed with fish in Iraq see Canard, "Riz," 122–3. As far as

confirm that preparations made of fish and rice were consumed both in Egypt and in the more eastbound parts of the Middle East. On the other hand, however, such dishes do not have counterparts in the medieval Arabic-Islamic cookbooks, which may suggest that in the Middle Ages the fish-and-rice combination was reserved for the poor. Be that as it may, rice could be sour or non-sour, salty, spicy and sweet, it could be enriched with fat, often colored with saffron, flavored with cinnamon, mastic, coriander, cumin, and/or onions (but apparently not too often with garlic). Interestingly, unlike today, rice did not accompany *mulūkhiyya* dish in the Middle Ages.[66]

The cookery books are not a record of what a given community really ate or of what its alimentary preferences were. As a source for studies on certain aspects of a culinary culture the cookery books are, however, invaluable. When it comes to identifying the place of rice in the food culture of medieval Cairenes, the first conclusion is suggested by the number of recipes calling for rice and included in the Cairene cookbooks. They seem to point to an average interest in the consumption of this cereal. A similar tendency can also be drawn from Khalīl aẓ-Ẓāhirī's list of dishes cooked in the sultan's palace kitchens. The cookery books allow for two more observations. One is that rice was the only so-called filler—apart from wheat bread crumbs and wheat grains—used in the Cairene cooking on a relatively broad scale. Maghrebian couscous did not win the Egyptian palates and was used only occasionally, while noodles and burghul groats were almost non-existent.[67] The other point to be made is that rice, at some point more widely accepted and used in the cookery in a variety of ways, seems not to have enjoyed any special esteem in medieval Egypt, nor was it treated with particular respect. Its processing or cooking never became a strictly observed ritual—as was, for example, the case with rice in Iran,[68] with couscous in the Maghreb, or with burghul in Syria and Iraq.

Indeed, in medieval Egypt rice never gained the position as a primary staple, nor did it ever manage to equal bread in its popularity. But in Cairo

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Egypt is concerned, a dish of rice and fish is mentioned in al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 199 (fol. 49*l*), and ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 384.

[66] See, for example, recipes in *Kanz*, 40, n. 84; 56, n. 134; 86, n. 220; 269, n. A15. For the modern way of preparing *mulūkhiyya* dish see Zubaida, "Rice," 100.

[67] For couscous, burghul, and noodles see below, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 169–72.

[68] For detailed study of pilaf (*polow*), and rice in general, in the Iranian culinary culture see Bert G. Fragner, "Zur Erforschung der kulinarischen Kultur Irans," *Die Welt des Islams* 23–24 (1984): 337–60; idem, "From the Caucasus to the Roof of the World: a Culinary Adventure," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 56–61; Zubaida, "Rice," 95–101.

it was by no means as uncommon an item as is sometimes believed. True, as far as rice consumption is concerned, the *ḥisba* manuals of the Mamluk epoch do not differ much from the manual written earlier by ash-Shayzarī. Two elements, however, may be of importance. One is that Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (the seventh-eighth/thirteenth-fourteenth centuries) included in his book a section on rice dealers, or *razzāzūn*, whose significance in the food business apparently grew by the early fourteenth century.[69] The other is an inconspicuous reference to rice incorporated by Ibn al-Ḥājj (the eighth/fourteenth century) into his *ḥisba*-style chapter in which the bazaar cooks are dealt with. What is meaningful in this reference is that it reflects, if anything, the commonness of rice rather than its exclusiveness. Inserted by Ibn al-Ḥājj into one basket with chickpeas, Swiss chard, colocasia, eggplant, pumpkin, carrots, cabbage, and turnips, otherwise rather inexpensive products constituting ingredients of dishes sold by the street cooks, rice could not be a highly priced or luxurious food item.[70]

What seems to support the hypothesis of the relative popularity of rice and deny its presumed exclusiveness are the chroniclers' reports on periodical changes of prices in medieval Cairo. In the majority of cases, the reports refer to various ordeals or crisis situations which manifested themselves in the increase of prices, particularly of basic foodstuffs. Since the occurrence of such situations intensified in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the reports refer mostly to that period. The information they provide is of a rather fragmentary character and cannot be compared with the earlier periods. Yet, this does not diminish the credibility of the most significant messages included in these accounts: namely, that in Cairo of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries rice was an important food item and that it was not excessively expensive. Mentioned by the chroniclers together with such vital articles as wheat, flour, carrots, sugar, cheese, meat, honey, oils, melons, and broad beans and barley (the latter two being used mostly as fodder), it apparently mattered in the Cairene menu. True, rice does not dominate these reports—unlike wheat, barley or meat. This, however, should not be surprising; fried cheese, a

[69] See Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 347, where rice dealers are said to cheat people by mixing rice with salt (may be that was why, by the way, a recipe in *Kanz* recommends to wash rice well, so that it is cleaned of salt?; see *Kanz*, 271, n. 22). For the possible use of salt as rice whitener see above, p. 141, n. 32. See also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 173, where the street cooks are said to adulterate *maḍīra* (a dish of meat cooked in yoghurt) with rice flour in order to increase the weight of the preparation. Cf. Ibn Bassām (the ninth/fifteenth century), *Nihāya*, 45–6.

[70] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 192.

distinguishing mark of the medieval Cairene menu, does not appear in the price lists on a regular basis, either. Apparently, important as they were, neither rice nor fried cheese were primary dietary staples.

As for the prices themselves, what one paid for rice was indeed more than what one spent on wheat. Thus in 804/1401–2, for instance, the price of an *irdabb* (about 70 kilograms) of wheat reached 50 dirhams, an *irdabb* of barley 25 dirhams, while for an *irdabb* of rice one had to pay 190 dirhams.[71] A year later the prices increased significantly, but the ratio changed in favor of rice: in 805/1402–3 an *irdabb* of wheat sold for 95 dirhams, and *irdabb* of barley for 60 dirhams, while for an *irdabb* of rice 250 dirhams were demanded.[72] A year later, in 806/1403–4, the prices increased further: wheat sold for 100 dirhams per *irdabb*, barley and broad beans for 70, while the price of an *irdabb* of rice reached 200 dirhams,[73] with the ratio of rice to wheat improved even further.

The years mentioned above were, to use al-Maqrīzī's words, the times of ordeals and ruination, when only few were able to afford the food they liked. Obviously enough, the prices featured in the records apply only to the years in which they were recorded. Nevertheless, it seems possible to use them as examples of a more general relation between the prices of rice and those of other cereals. And this relation, while revealing how expensive rice was when compared to barley and wheat, seems to indicate that rice *was* within the reach of an average middle-class person. Three elements substantiate such a conclusion: one, that barley (in 806/1403–4 almost 3 times cheaper than rice) was, above all, a fodder and generally not a food item to be fed to humans. Two, that wheat (in 806/1403–4 costing half the price of rice)[74] was a strategic agriculture product of which bread, the basic Egyptian staple, was made. An average middle-class household seemed to have used as much as one *irdabb* of wheat per month.[75] And three, that rice was merely an ingredient used in a number of cooked preparations and, as such, was comparable neither to barley nor to wheat. This means that rice was in fact not as expensive as it appears

[71] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 638–9.
[72] Ibid., 673.
[73] Ibid., 678; cf. ibid., 685, 730, 737; also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 826 and 842 (the annal for 797/1394–5).
[74] According to al-Maqrīzī, during the cleaning process wheat lost one-sixth of its initial volume; see al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 78.
[75] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 235, 244.

to have been at the first glance.[76] Doubtlessly, rice was beyond the reach of those with the lowest income or no income at all—but so were most of other food items, ordinary bread and cheese included. For the middle-class Cairenes, however, a rice dish was not something they could not afford. Moreover, the evidence dating back to the early post-medieval period and showing not only popularity, but also commonness of rice in Egypt, indicates that in the later Middle Ages the situation could not be very much different. Whatever its true share in satisfying the alimentary needs of medieval Cairenes, the popularity of rice was unquestionable in the ninth/fifteenth century.

At the time of the Ottoman conquest of 922–3/1517, the demand for rice was apparently high enough to assure the well-being of rice threshers working in rice cultivation centers in the Delta.[77] By the end of the century, a Polish traveler Mikołaj Radziwiłł (in Egypt in 1580) noticed that the offer of the city kitchens included lamb, chicken, and geese, but that it was rice and cakes with oil that were the most abundant of all.[78] A decade later de Villamont (in Egypt in 1590) observed that "they quite frequently use rice in their soups,"[79] while Christophe Harant (in Egypt in 1598) confirmed that rice was one of numerous food items sold by the Cairene cooks.[80] At the same time, Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, a Turkish visitor to Cairo (in Egypt in 1599), spoke of "stewed meat and rice and saffron pudding" which, beside "sour-dish and caraway soup of very low standard," were part of the meals that "some of the great give for the people."[81] Muṣṭafā ʿAlī makes it quite clear that those of the city's rich who indeed offered charity food (tasteless as it was, according to him) subsidized the cheapest foodstuffs. Rice could not

[76] It may be interesting to quote here, for the sake of comparison, the report on prices for the year 397/1006–7 as transmitted in al-Maqrīzī's *Ighātha*. According to this source, in the early fifth/eleventh century wheat was two times cheaper than rice: the price of a *tillīs* (8 *wayba*s, or 97.5 kilograms) of wheat reached four dinars, while a *wayba* (12.168 kilograms) of rice sold for one dinar (see al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 32). In other words, in 397/1006–7 for one dinar one could get over 12 kilograms of rice or over 24 kilograms of wheat. It should be noted that the metric equivalents applied here are supposed to refer to the early Fatimid epoch and, as such, to be different from those valid for the later times. See Hinz, *Masse*, 51–52. S.D. Goitein, while discussing the Geniza documents, uses later medieval conversion rate, according to which one *wayba* equaled 11.6 kilograms (Goitein, *Daily Life*, 235). According to Eliyahu Ashtor, an Egyptian *tillīs* of wheat equaled 67.5 kilograms; see *EI2,* IV, "Ḳamḥ" by E. Ashtor.

[77] See Leo Africanus' travel account quoted above, p. 141.

[78] Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91.

[79] De Villamont, *Voyages*, 230.

[80] Harant, *Voyage*, 198, 201.

[81] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 49–50.

thus have been a costly item by that time. Moreover, not only was it commonplace and sold well[82] but, as Coppin noticed (in Egypt in 1638–1639 and 1643–1646), when added to soup it constituted one of the elements of the otherwise poor and "valueless" menu of the lowest orders of the society.[83] In the eleventh/seventeenth century rice was reportedly "so common in Egypt, and [grew] in such quantities, that it [was] exported abroad by full boats. Not only children [ate] rice, but all the inhabitants, craftsmen, bourgeois, and even grand lords. There [was] no meal that would go without a number of rice dishes or at least prepared with rice. Rice [was] a savory food, substantial and [sold] well."[84]

A century later rice, rich in starch and nourishing, was still popular. As Richard Pococke (in Egypt in the eighteenth century) noted down, "their dishes consisting of Pilaw, soups, Dulma, which is any vegetable stuffed with forced meat: as cucumbers, onions, cawl leaves."[85] True, both "Pilaw" and "Dolma" can be prepared with burghul or a kind of cracked wheat (still very popular in Turkey and the Levant). Considering, however, that burghul was never approved of in Cairo, we should rather assume that what Pococke saw or ate was made of rice. By the time Pococke visited Egypt, the Ottoman tastes and culinary preferences, including the extensive consumption of rice, were already well entrenched in Cairo. So much so that with time rice not only became a widespread cereal, but apparently also an indispensable item of the local menu.[86] Common and important as it finally became, rice never supplanted or replaced bread as a primary staple. Habitually, a portion of rice was eaten with bread, like any other dish of the local cuisine.

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[82] Fermanel, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 93.

[83] Coppin, *Voyages*, 122.

[84] Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 513–14.

[85] Richard Pococke, *A Description of the East, and Some Other Countries* (London: Printed for the Author by W. Bowyer, 1743–1745), vol. I. *Observations on Egypt*, 183.

[86] As late as in the nineteenth century, simple "dish of boiled rice (called 'ruzz mufelfel,' the 'pilav' of the Turks), mixed with a little butter, and seasoned with salt and pepper" was a delicacy in the houses of the well-to-do Cairenes; see Lane, *Manners*, 152. At the same time *koshari* (Ar. *kusharī*), a cheap rice and lentil dish brought, most probably, by the British from India, became one of the most popular Cairene street staples; see Sami Zubaida, "National, Communal and Global Dimensions in Middle Eastern Food Cultures," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 41; for references to Indian khichari see Collingham, *Curry*, 22, 119.

D. *Wheat*

Wheat (*qamḥ, ḥinṭa; Triticum* spp. L.), the most important of the medieval Egyptian cereal grains, was known in Egypt since antiquity. But the main variety grown and consumed in ancient Egypt was not identical with what was grown and eaten in the Middle Ages. The former was husked wheat, or emmer, the three genome *Triticum dicoccum*, continuously cultivated from Pre-Dynastic times up to the Roman era.[87] The varieties consumed in the Middle Ages were the so-called naked wheats, particularly *Triticum durum*. Introduced to Egypt only in the Ptolemaic and Roman times, they steadily supplanted the local emmer wheat. The pace of change was fast, and within a relatively short period the switch to *Triticum durum* was almost total.[88] Apart from the periods of crises which from time to time devastated Egyptian agriculture and economy, wheat remained throughout the Middle Ages *the* cereal from which bread was made in Egypt. Bread was the basic food for the poor and an indispensable addition to any dish for the well-to-do; as such, it was the medieval Egyptian staff of life and the staple whose principal position in the local diet was incontestable. Hence the strategic importance of wheat in the Egyptian market and its central position among the Egyptian crops.

The cereals used for bread production are what differentiated the Egyptian and, more generally, Levantine loaves from Western ones of the same period. Until the times following the Black Death, the majority of Europeans, regardless of social class, ate mostly barley, rye, or mixed bread, and it was only the most privileged who could enjoy the white bread made of wheat.[89] No wonder, then, that for many Western travelers it was the color of the Egyptian loaves that attracted attention. Frescobaldi, who noticed that the Egyptian bread was very badly baked, at the same time appreciated it was as white as milk—which was because they had "very

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[87] For detailed information on wheat in ancient Egypt see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 460–5, 486–92, where the authors observe that it is usually assumed that wheat in ancient Egypt was not commonly consumed by the poor, possibly because it was expensive. At the same time they admit, however, that it is difficult to determine which breads were made from wheat or from barley; ibid., 487.

[88] Crawford, "Food," 140; also Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 490. For remarks on wheat cultivation in medieval Egypt see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 101.

[89] Ashtor, "Diet," 129; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), I, 571; Frances and Joseph Gies, *Daily Life in Medieval Times: A Vivid, Detailed Account of Birth, Marriage and Death; Food, Clothing, and Housing; Love and Labor in the Middle Ages* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1999), 165; Ruiz, *Spanish Society*, 212.

fine and good wheat."[90] Symon Simeonis also noticed the whiteness of Egyptian bread, while Sigoli, even more impressed, observed that in Alexandria there was "the most beautiful bread and good and cheaper at any time than at home."[91] For the Arab visitors the quality of the Egyptian bread must have been remarkable, too: the fourth/tenth-century Syrian traveler al-Muqaddasī noticed that only fine, *ḥuwwārī* bread was baked in al-Fusṭāṭ.[92]

Al-khubz al-ḥuwwārī, or pure, wheat-flour white bread, sometimes sprinkled with assorted seeds,[93] might have been the only kind of bread al-Muqaddasī saw in al-Fusṭāṭ. It is hardly possible, however, that it was the only kind of bread available in town. The existing records show that the Egyptian bread, although generally made of one kind of cereal, was by no means uniform. As anywhere else, in al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo the quality of loaves baked for the well-to-do had to differ from the miserable and cheap bread of the poor. The former probably preferred *al-khubz al-ḥuwwārī* or *al-khubz as-samīd*, or expensive semolina bread,[94] while the latter had to make do with *al-khubz al-khushkār*, or bread made of coarsely-ground and not well refined flour, sometimes additionally enriched with various

[90] Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 52.

[91] Symon Simeonis, *Itineraria Symonis Simeonis et Willelmi de Worcestre*, ed. J. Nasmith, Cambridge 1878, 34, quoted in Ashtor, "Diet," 128; Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 161. See also, for example, Harant (the end of the sixteenth century), *Voyage*, 71; Gonzales (the seventeenth century), II, 186; de Villamont (the end of the sixteenth century), *Voyages*, 230. As far as Western travel accounts are concerned, the most detailed description of the Cairene bread was written by Jean Coppin (the seventeenth century) who observed that "they have three main kinds of bread in greater Cairo: there is the Basha bread, which is made in the shape of a boat; it is white and as good as bread can be (I ate it a few times); and there is bread of the Franks, and this are in fact little breads like those which one can see in our cities. But the bread of the Turks and of the common people is quite flat and unleavened; it is thin and underbaked and they fold it like a piece of tissue and after a day it is quite bad to taste;" Coppin, *Voyages*, 122. Obviously enough, an account dating back to the seventeenth century cannot be considered fully relevant to the pre-Ottoman Cairo. Cf. Lane, *Manners*, 139: "The bread is always made in the form of a round flat cake, generally about a span in width and a finger's breadth in thickness." See also Mielck, *Terminologie*, 78.

[92] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 199.

[93] Such as, for instance, sesame, cumin, fennel, anis, nigella, or poppy seeds; al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 202. On *al-khubz al-ḥuwwārī* see also Mielck, *Terminologie*, 75.

[94] Semolina is coarsely ground grain, usually wheat, with particles mostly between 0.25 and 0.75 mm in diameter. According to Charles Perry, "*samīd* was, like semolina, a grain product intermediate between crushed groats (*jashīsh*, *jarīsh*) and milled flour (*daqīq*, *ṭaḥīn*);" Perry, "Familiar Foods," 284. Cf. Mielck, *Terminologie*, 75–6. Actually, *al-khubz as-samīd* was, most probably, made of a mixture of semolina and flour, as bread cannot be made of semolina alone; many thanks to prof. Michael Abdalla for this comment.

non-wheat admixtures.[95] Black bread, or *al-khubz al-aswad* occasionally mentioned by some authors, seems to have been not so much the bread of the poor but a crisis-time bread made of barley or sorghum, possibly with admixture of some of cereal substitutes which included flour made of broad beans, lupine, chickpeas, lentils, bran etc.[96]

Goitein is probably right to observe that using the term "loaf" to designate the Egyptian bread *raghīf* is convenient but also somewhat misleading, for the "Near Eastern bread is flat, round, and soft, to be easily broken by hand."[97] Indeed, it seems it was almost always flat and usually round; its softness, however, was a demanded attribute rather than the real feature of what the city bakeries produced. Ideally, it should have been made of "soft, white and new flour to which water was added little by little until it became not too moist and not too dry."[98] Well kneaded and baked on slow fire, the dough was then supposed to be "left for a while in the open air, so that its moistness was absorbed and its steam allowed to go out."[99] In real circumstances of everyday life, however, good, new flour was not always available, bakers were not always patient enough to knead the dough properly, the oven fire was difficult to control and, moreover, the proportions of leaven[100] and salt were left to the discretion of a baker or his apprentice. In effect, the much sought-after bread, "made according to the rules, with appropriate quantity of leaven and salt, with its dough well kneaded and raised, baked on a slow and moderate fire long enough to be well-cooked,"[101] was not the only kind available from the market. There

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[95] For *al-khubz al-khushkār* see also Mielck, *Terminologie*, 78. For kinds of Fusṭāṭi/Cairene bread see al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 48, 72, 74, 75; al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 191; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 23. On bread and bread production in the medieval Near East see, for example, al-Isrā'īlī's chapter on bread where its author discusses various kinds of bread ovens; al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 190–202; *EI2*, V, "Khubz" by Ch. Pellat; Heine, *Kulinarishe Studien*, 99–103. Cf. Mielck, *Terminologie*, 67–83; Waines, "Cereals," 263–85; Ashtor, "Diet," 127–9; also Abdalla, *Kultura*, 51–78, where bread and bread production of contemporary Assyrians is discussed in detail.

[96] *Al-khubz al-aswad* is mentioned, for example, in al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 48, 72, 74, 75; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 235; Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 89–90, where flour made of chickpeas, broad beans, and lupin is mentioned; for a comment on *ad-daqīq an-nukhālī*, a bran flour of which a kind of bran bread was made see al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiyya*, 191. See also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 237, where the difference between regular and good wheat is discussed.

[97] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 243.

[98] *Kanz*, 10–11; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 3b–4a.

[99] *Kanz*, 10–11; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 3b–4a.

[100] The Egyptians leavened their bread "by putting in a piece of the last dough they made, which they always lay by;" Pococke, *Description*, 186. Cf. Abdalla, *Kultura*, 62.

[101] Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 193. Cf. Mielck, *Terminologie*, 46.

was also bread that was "made with little leaven and little salt, with its dough kneaded not long enough and rising for too short and, moreover, underbaked. And there was what was made with too much leaven and too much salt. And there was sour *faṭīr* to which no leaven nor salt were added at all."[102] The unleavened and unsalted *faṭīr* was, as al-Isrāʾīlī points out, quite popular among peasants and harvesters who "found it tasty."[103]

No wonder, then, that the Cairene bread, important as it was in the local daily menu, did not evoke particular enthusiasm among its consumers. Ibn Riḍwān who, apart from being a renowned doctor, was also a son of a poor baker from Giza (the the fourth-fifth/tenth-eleventh centuries) complained that "the bread made from wheat produced in Egypt is not edible if it sits for a day and a night. After that, it is no longer enjoyable and does not hold together in one piece. It is not chewable and becomes moldy in short time; the same applies to flour. This is different from the breads of other countries."[104] Ibn Riḍwān, who looked at the world from the Galenic perspective, maintained that a similar situation concerned all the crops and fruits in Egypt as well as products made from them. This was so because they were "doomed to early spoilage on account of the swiftness of their transformation and alteration."[105] For al-Maqrīzī, the reasons behind such a condition of the local bread related to human behavior rather than to natural circumstances. While reporting on inedibility of the Cairene bread during the periods of privation, he explained that it was the high degree of impurity that made the loaves tasteless as soon as they became cold.[106] True, during periods of crisis bread was particularly bad, but the poor quality of flour was not a matter of temporary occurrence in medieval Cairo. Buying flour at the flour-dealer's or bread from the bakery or the street stand was apparently always a risky transaction, so much so that to avoid irritating surprises people preferred to make their own bread out of their own flour which they had milled out of their own wheat.[107]

Another problem with the thin Cairene bread loaf was that it was not resistant to heat and that, as Arnold von Harff noticed in the fifteenth

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[102] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 193.

[103] Ibid., 193–4; for unleavened bread cf. also al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 87, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 104; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 431; *Wuṣla*, 631; and Mielck, *Terminologie*, 46–7.

[104] Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 90.

[105] Ibid., 90.

[106] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 33.

[107] See above, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares and market control," pp. 115–18.

century, the great heat of the sun within three hours made the bread as hard as stone, and thus inedible. This was also why, according to him, there were so many bakeries, "for the bread had to be eaten hot from the oven."[108] And this was also why, in one of the Cairene *Arabian Nights* stories, a mother asks her son to get her "hot bread and cheese."[109] It was not only that she preferred her bread hot rather than cold. It was, above all, that any bread other than hot from the oven was simply inedible.[110] This feature of the Egyptian bread seems to have been known in other parts of the Near East, too. Jalāl ad-Dīn ar-Rūmī, the Persian mystic who had never been to Egypt, must have heard this truth during his stay in Syria. Down-to-earth as it was, for some reason the information proved inspiring enough to make this otherwise spiritual poet use it with his uniquely candid finesse:

> My poetry is like the bread of Egypt
> The day after, you cannot eat it
> Eat it while it is fresh
> Before dust has settled on it.[111]

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[108] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109; see also Coppin, *Voyages*, 122. Cf. Michael Abdalla who, while discussing the flat, thin bread of the Bedouins says that "in dry, hot climate, Bedouin bread quickly becomes hard, dry and twisted; hence, in the summer time, there are two or three bakings per day, in fact before every meal;" Abdalla, *Kultura*, 55. See also Mielck, *Terminologie*, 66.

[109] "The Tale of Jūdar and his Brothers;" cf. also al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 89 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. transl. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 3), and Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, in Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 50, where hot bread is mentioned. On the overproduction of bread in medieval al-Fusṭāṭ see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 238.

[110] In the discussed context, one can hardly refrain from quoting Galen's remarks: "When the einkhorn is very good quality, warm breads from it are much stronger than those from emmero, but when kept to the next day, they are inferior; for since they have a stickier dough they are very considerably condensed, especially when prepared carelessly. So that after one or two days (and much more on subsequent ones) a person eating this bread thinks that a lump of clay reposes in his stomach. But when still warm it is eagerly sought by city-dwellers, who take it with some cheese of the country, which they call sour-milk cheese. This cheese should be soft, and the bread should still hold the heat from the oven. Bread eaten like this is highly regarded not only by country folk but by city-dwellers as well. But bread three or four days old is already distasteful even to the country people." See Owen Powell, *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (*De alimentorum facultatibus*). *Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 54–5 (518–19).

[111] A. Banani, "Rūmī the Poet," in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī*, ed. A. Banani, R. Hovannisian, and G. Sabagh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 38. Persian "*nan-e mesr*," as used by Rūmī, is explained by Banani as "the unleavened bread consumed in haste by the Israelites in flight."

It is impossible to judge how many loaves an average medieval Cairene consumed per day except by comparing with contemporary bread consumption rate in more traditional households. It seems certain, however, that bread was a dominant item in a regular middle-class household expenditures.[112] According to the Geniza documents, the weekly ration allotted by a husband to his working wife was four loaves of bread, "each weighing approximately a pound, a total of about 1,750 grams," and a pound of meat. The same quantity was "handed out by the Jewish community of al-Fusṭāṭ to a destitute person."[113] Indeed, four loaves was a meager share, even if we take into consideration that bread in Cairo was never eaten by itself. Essential and satiating as it was, as a staple food item it did not always play the role analogous to rice in Southeast Asia or manioc in tropical Africa.[114] Dipped or used as a spoon, plate, or an ingredient in cooked preparations, it could either be served as a side dish to to the principal food or constitute one of a preparation's essential ingredients. Without it, however, no dish was complete. Be it simple food like "sour milk and cucumbers when in season, fried eggs, and oil to dip the bread in" or "salt cheese like curds,"[115] or be it the elaborate preparations of the Arabic-Islamic *haute cuisine*, all had to be served with bread.

As a cooked food ingredient, bread was a multipurpose and useful item. Cut into triangles, stuffed with either meaty or sweet filling, and fried in oil, it could be made into *sanbūsik*, or samosa-style pies.[116] It could be also stuffed—as in recipes for famous *bazmāward* "sandwiches"—with pounded roast meat seasoned with leaves of mint, wine vinegar, salted lemon, walnuts, and rose-water. Cut into thin pieces, *bazmāward* was

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[112] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 233. According to Geniza documents, an average middle-class urban household needed twelve *irdabbs* of wheat per year, or one *irdabb* (measuring about 90 liters or 70 kilograms) per month; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 235, 244.

[113] Ibid., 236.

[114] Although father Antonius Gonzales, a seventeenth-century visitor to Egypt and an astute observer of its everyday life, noted that "numerous [were] those who for their midday or evening meal [had] nothing but wheat bread." *Voyage*, 185–6. A century later Pococke observed that bread, dipped in sesame oil in which some seeds were pounded, was—apart from onions—the main food of "the middling people;" Pococke, *Description*, 183.

[115] Pococke, *Description*, 184.

[116] Generally, the recipes for *sanbūsik* (spelled also *sambūsik*, *sanbūsaj*, *sanbūsaq*, *sanbūsak*) call for special, thin bread loaves (*ruqāq sanbūsik* or *ruqāq al-kunāfa*); see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 72, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 78; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 379, 382, 386–7; *Wuṣla*, 553–4, 617; *Kanz*, 49–50, nn. 115, 116; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 12b, 34b. See also a description of the dish as presented in the Abbasid poetry, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 29–30.

arranged on a tray or in an earthenware vessel and covered with mint leaves.[117] The same filling could be also spread on a loaf of flat bread which, made into a roll, was cut into slices and called *awsāṭ*.[118] In a number of dishes called *jawādhib*, two flat bread loaves could serve as a base and cover for various sweet fruit, almond or poppy fillings arranged between them.[119]

Since immediate drying was not an exclusive feature of the Cairene bread, but of most of the bread loaves of this kind baked in the region, it came only naturally that the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture boasted a vast collection of culinary preparations in which day-old bread was used. Of these, the priority is definitely due to *tharīd*, one of the most classical of the pre-Islamic Arab dishes and probably the most famous of them all. Mentioned in the Sunna and praised by the Prophet as the best of dishes,[120] it was possibly known not only in Arabia, but among the Bedouins of Syria and Egypt as well. But even if *tharīd* had been consumed in the Egyptian deserts before the Islamic conquest, it seems that in Egyptian cities it was popularized only some time later, either in the course of adopting the desert dish from the Arab warrior newcomers or after its reappearance in Egypt as a dish already adopted by and adjusted to the new wave cuisine. All in all, it seems certain that in the fifth-sixth/eleventh-twelfth century *tharīd* was eaten in Cairo. Made of stewed meat and of crumbled or torn-up bread which was simply thrown on the broth to moisten, *tharīd* was cooked and sold in the city streets by the dealers of cooked sheep's heads.[121] Another dry bread preparation of Bedouin and pre-Islamic

[117] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 73, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 79; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 381–2; the recipe for *bazmāward ruhbānī* or "monks' *bazmāward*" (ibid., 448) recommends to roll the bread before cutting it. For *bazmāward* as mentioned in the Fatimid sources see, for example, Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144, 182.

[118] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 382.

[119] For *jawādhib* see also below, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 197; and II.7. "Fruits," pp. 281, 285.

[120] "'Aisha surpasses other women as *tharīd* surpasses other dishes;" see, for example, al-Bukhārī, "Aḥādīth al-anbiyā'," 3159, 3179; "al-Aṭ'ima," 4998, 4999. Engl. transl. by Charles Perry, "Elements of Arab Feasting," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 228.

[121] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 32 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 56); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 43. The recipe for *tharīd raṭba* as included in *Wuṣla* has in fact little in common with the simple Bedouin fare. Made of thin, quality bread the pieces of which are covered with spicy meatballs, hummus, sweetened pomegranate juice, broth and melted tail fat, the dish is a typical example of a coarse country meal turned into an elaborate urban dish; see *Wuṣla*, 534. The regular, meat broth *tharīd* had also its milky version. Called "*umm nārayn*," it was made of bread crumbles thrown on the milk, boiling and seasoned with mastic, Ceylon cinnamon, butter, camphor, and *shayba* (tree wormwood, *Artemisia*

origin was *ḥays*, sweet meatballs covered with dust of fine-ground sugar and made of dried pounded bread mixed with pounded biscuit (*kaʿk*), pitted dried dates, pounded walnuts, almonds and pistachios, toasted sesame seeds, and warm sesame oil. Enduring and appropriate for lunch boxes, *ḥays* was recommended as "excellent for travelers."[122]

But the recipes for dishes which called for bread crumbs were by no means limited to those originating in the food culture of the pre-Islamic Arabian Bedouins. There were also Egyptian preparations such as *asyūṭiyya*, a kind of pudding named after the Egyptian city of Asyūṭ. With a filling made of crumbed and sieved dry bread mixed with honey, syrup, poppy seeds, dry dates, saffron, almonds, and pistachios that was arranged between two flat breads, fragranced with musk and rose-water, it was cooked while covered with tail fat and sesame oil in the *tannūr* oven.[123] And there was *harīsat al-fusṭuq*, or pistachio porridge, a dish which was not only Egyptian but, very probably, specifically a Cairene invention. The dish was made by toasting sieved dry bread crumbs in sesame oil, to which syrup, honey, pounded pistachios and torn chicken breasts were later added. Optionally colored with indigo, the dish, when cooked, was perfumed with musk and rose-water.[124]

These are only some illustrations of what the urban Arabic-Islamic food culture recommended with regard to day-old bread. Other examples included various kinds of "puddings," either of the *judhāb* or *khabīṣ* kind[125]

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arborescens); see recipe in *Kanz*, 48, n. 111; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 12a–12b. While in Egypt in the eighteenth century, Richard Pococke noticed what might be regarded as a sweet variety of *tharīd*: "they have a very good dish for one who has a good appetite, which is these cakes broken all to pieces, and mix'd with a sort of syrup made of the sugar cane when it is green;" Pococke, *Description*, 183.

[122] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 88, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 105; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 435; *Kanz*, 130 n. 343. Cf. description of "ḥais" by Lane, *Lexicon*, 686.

[123] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 413–4, 454; *Kanz*, 55, n. 131, 104, n. 269, 106, n. 274; *Wuṣla*, 638. *Asyūṭiyya* was mentioned by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa among the sweetmeats sold by the city confectioners, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 182.

[124] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 427–8; *Kanz*, 112, n. 291; the bread crumbs were not, however, the key ingredient in pistachio *harīsa*; see recipes given in *Wuṣla*, 621–3; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 37a; and the description of the dish as recorded by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, fols. 48*r*–48*l* (pp. 193–5). For more details on the dish see below, chapter II.8. "Nuts and seeds," p. 290. Dishes which called for fried bread crumbs included also *shīrāziyya*-sweet, the preparation of which required that the crumbs, mixed with nut meats and poppy seeds, were fried in sesame oil, sweetened with syrup and honey and perfumed with musk and rose-water; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 416; *Kanz*, 114, n. 299; *Wuṣla*, 638–9.

[125] Such as, for example, *judhāb al-khubz*, a dish which required bread crumbs steeped in milk, or as date *judhāb*, in which crumbs were mixed with dry date paste, sugar, honey,

and generally similar in style to *asyūṭiyya* dish, as well as several varieties of *basīsa*, or a "bread crumb dish" still popular in the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo and made of day-old bread hand crumbled with sesame oil so that "it became like poppy seeds" to which sugar, poppy seeds, toasted sesame seeds, syrup or honey, and rose-water were added.[126]

The Near Eastern palates clearly preferred a combination of bread crumbs with sweet ingredients, but sweetness was by no means the obligatory feature of all the bread crumb preparations. *Tharīd* is one example of a savory bread crumb dish. Another one is a variety of *summāqiyya*, a dish of fat meat and vegetables in which macerated and strained bread crumbs were used to thicken sour sumac water with which the preparation was flavored.[127] Interestingly, crumbled bread could also serve as a kind of base upon which the elements of meat dish were arranged. This was the case of trotters (*akāriʿ*) which, cooked in the *tannūr* oven, were served on crumbled bread moistened with broth.[128] *Kabīs*, a cinnamon-flavored oven dish of fat meat, chickpeas, and wheat could be served upon crumbled bread, too.[129] Important as it was for making various sweet and savory dishes, dry bread was also essential for preparing *murrī*, a very particular relish comparable to soy sauce and to Roman *garum*. Its months-long production process consisted, roughly speaking, in leaving pounded unleavened bread, mixed with rotten barley and some seasonings, in the heat of the Near Eastern summer sun.[130]

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saffron and sesame oil and, optionally, with poppy seeds or pistachios; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 411–12; *Wuṣla*, 633, 635; *Kanz*, 112, n. 292. Or as in *khabīṣ al-khubz*, a pudding made of bread crumbs dissolved in boiling water, strained, then mixed with dissolved sugar, moistened with sesame oil and fragranced with rose-water and musk; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 415.

[126] Also called *lubābiyya*; for recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 436, 464; *Kanz*, 39, n. 78; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 10b; *Wuṣla*, 544, 631, 654. *Lubābiyya* was mentioned by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa among the sweetmeats sold by the city confectioners; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 182.

[127] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 46, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 37; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 312; *Wuṣla*, 587. All the remaining recipes for *summāqiyya* (i.e. those included in *Waṣf*, *Kanz*, *Zahr*, *Wuṣla*, or in "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook" as translated by Perry) do not call for bread crumbs.

[128] And, optionally, sprinkled with pomegranate seeds, or sumac, or yoghurt with garlic; for recipe see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 370.

[129] And, optionally, with little yoghurt and garlic on it. Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69–70, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 73; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368. See also a recipe for *ʿuqayqiyya*, or a dish of fried *ʿuqayqī* bread and meat, *Wuṣla*, 584.

[130] For a more detailed discussion on *murrī* see below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 341.

Ordinary bread loaves were not, however, all that was baked of wheat flour in Cairo. *Al-khubz at-tannūrī bi-jubn Khaysī*, or "bread with the *Khaysī* cheese baked in the *tannūr* oven," is one of the most interesting examples of a number of more or less refined breads the descriptions of which can be found in cookery books. With dough kneaded of wheat, eggs, spices (*abzār*), fresh milk, and pieces of fried salty *Khaysī* cheese,[131] it must have been an exclusively Egyptian specialty and possibly a specifically Cairene item as well. Its actual popularity is, however, impossible to define.[132] Other extraordinary breads described in the cookbooks included different varieties of spice breads, usually made with milk instead of water, often with fat, sometimes with nuts or seeds, sometimes with sugar.[133]

The most popular of the products akin to bread was probably *kaʿk*, a biscuit made in a number of versions. In its simplest form, *kaʿk* was "made by peasants from crushed wheat" and, dried, "it [was] their food during the entire year."[134] The *kaʿk* baked in the Fatimid kitchens[135] must have differed from the coarse *kaʿk* of Egyptian fellahs, and so probably did the version eaten by the inhabitants of urban centers such as al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo.[136] Generally, cookery books show *kaʿk* as a sweetish, fragrant, ring-shaped biscuit bread whose dough was made of flour kneaded with clarified butter (*samn*), musk, and rose-water, and fried in sesame oil. While fresh, it could be served dipped in syrup and sprinkled with crushed pistachios.[137] When dried, it could be used instead of dried bread for making *tharīd*[138]

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131 For *Khaysī* cows and cheese see below, chapter II.5. "Dairy products," pp. 232, 235–7, 239.

132 *Wuṣla*, 659.

133 See, above all, section on *makhbūzāt*, *Wuṣla*, 657–662, which includes recipes such as that for *kaʿk* biscuit, for *khubz tannūrī* ("bread baked in the *tannūr* oven"), for *khubz bi-jubn Khaysī* ("bread with *Khaysī* cheese"), *khubz furnī* ("oven bread"), for *khubz bi-bayḍ* ("bread with egg"), for "bread made by the Franks and Armenians and called *iflāghūn*" (the recipe discussed by Rodinson, "Studies," 155–6) and for *khubz ṭayyib nādir* ("rare good bread"); see also recipes for *khubz al-abāzīr* ("spice bread") to be eaten with sweets, in *Kanz*, 265, n. A2; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 86, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 102–3; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 426, 431, 461. For various kinds of early Abbasid refined breads see al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 33–4, 35 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 118–26).

134 Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 92. Cf. Mielck, *Terminologie*, 72.

135 Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 64.

136 Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 341; cf. also Blachere, "L'agglomération du Caire vue par quatre voyageurs arabes du Moyen Âge," *AI* 8 (1969): 20. In the Mamluk times (and possibly in the pre-Mamluk era, too), *kaʿk* was a part of the soldiers' food ration; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 149.

137 The "Cairene" cookery books contain a number of recipes for *kaʿk*; see, for example, *Kanz*, 11–12, nn. 2–6, 266, n. A4; also Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 4a–4b; *Wuṣla*, 657–8.

138 *Kanz*, 8, n. 26.

and *ḥays*;[139] when pounded, it could be used for making condiments such as *bunn* or *kāmakh*.[140] Only slightly less popular than *kaʿk* must have been *khushkanān*, longish dry biscuits made of flour kneaded with sesame oil and filled with a mixture of sugar, almonds and spices.[141] *Basandūd*, or cakes made of two pierced biscuits prepared of *khushkanān* dough and layered with *ḥalwa sādhija*, seem to have been as common.[142] Well documented from the Fatimid times on, these two kinds of biscuits were usually accompanied by *fānīd*, a sweetmeat made of melted sugar, flour, and honey.[143] Apart from baked goods, flour was also used for making sweets of the *ḥalāwa* kind. In this case the preparation, usually made of flour mixed with clarified butter or oil, sugar, honey or molasses, and various kinds of nuts, was either cooked in a pot or made without cooking.[144]

Bread, biscuits, and sweet-spicy cookies were not all that was made of wheat grain. Apart from being the basic ingredient of baked goods, wheat,

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[139] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 88, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 105; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 435; *Kanz*, 130 n. 343.

[140] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 406 (recipe for *bunn*) or *Kanz*, 186, n. 502 (recipe for *kāmakh*); for more details see below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 340.

[141] Mentions of *khushkanān*, the name which could also be spelled *khushkanānaj*, *khushkanānak*, or *khushtanānak*, are to be found in two important Fatimid sources: *Akhbār Miṣr* by Ibn al-Maʾmūn, 35, 60, 63, 64, 92, 93; and Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144, 145, 146, 182, 213; see also al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa-l-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-l-Āthār* (London: Al-Furqān, 1995), 82, 166, 168, 172, 173, 174, 213 and idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 425–7, where all the mentions refer to the Fatimid epoch. For later times see *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 183, 184; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 48; also Ibn Sūdūn mentions *khushtanānak* a number of times, *Nuzha*, 72, 142, 152. For recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 86, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 102; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 425, 426 (and 333, stuffed with meat); *Wuṣla*, 215, 465, 656; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 271 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 418–19). Cf. Mielck, *Terminologie*, 78, and definition in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 569. According to Dozy, *Suppl.*, *khushkanān* had a form of a crescent.

[142] It is not clear, however, what exactly *ḥalwa sādhija* was. Possibly, it constituted some kind of pasty mixture made of ground nuts, syrup/honey, and starch. Mentions of *basandūd* in reference to the Fatimid epoch can be found in Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 63, 83, 92, 93; Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144, 145, 182, 213; also al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 82, 166, 168, 172, 174, 213, 218 and idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 425–7; for mentions referring to the Mamluk times see idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 183; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 48, 49. For recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 465; *Kanz*, 124, n. 326; *Wuṣla*, 656.

[143] According to Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *fānīd* was also called *kaʿb ghazāl*; Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144, 213; Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 90; al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 82, 173, 174; for references to *fānīd/kaʿb ghazāl* in the context of the Mamluk times see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 183; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 49; Ibn Sūdūn spells it *bānīd*, *Nuzha*, 48, 68, 70. For recipe see *Kanz*, 103 n. 265.

[144] For more details on *ḥalāwa/ḥalwā* see below, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," pp. 309–11.

either in the form of grains, groats, or flour, was also used in a number of cooked preparations. The most distinctive of them was, doubtlessly, a meat porridge called *harīsa*. Appreciated by the common people of the Abbasid Iraq, *harīsa* was equally popular in Fatimid al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo, where it was not only sold ready-to-eat in the city markets but also cooked in the caliphal palaces.[145] Made of beef and/or mutton,[146] it did not require any fanciful ingredients or spices. It involved, however, burdensome work and professional kitchen equipment, such as a sizable pot made of lead,[147] and the *tannūr* oven.[148] The name *harīsa*, coming from the verb *harasa*, or "to crush, mash, pound until tender," only partly reflects the laborious process of its preparation. This involved shredding boiled meat and boiling it again together with clean, ground wheat. The cooking should have been done in a *tannūr* oven rather than on an open fire. After that "the top of the pot was to be covered and sealed around with dough and sealed on the outside, and the top of the *tannūr* [was] covered all the night."[149]

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[145] Despite the fact that the process of its preparation was labor-demanding, the dish seems to have been popular—in the streets of al-Fusṭāṭ *harīsa* was available from at least the early Fatimid times, which may mean that it was consumed in Cairo from the date of the city's founding. Heavy and coarse as it was, *harīsa* was not, however, exclusively the food of the city streets. The caliphal kitchens also cooked significant quantities of it, although it is difficult to say whether the caliphs themselves or their courtly entourage, consumed it. In Ibn al-Ma'mūn's chronicle *harīsa* is mentioned (made either of chicken, beef, or of mutton) as one of the goods distributed, on the occasion of the Nawrūz festival, by the Fatimid palace; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 65, 67. See also al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 46 and Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 115, where the Fusṭāṭi *harāʾisiyyūn*, or *harīsa* dealers, are mentioned; see also ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 36–7 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 60–61); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 39; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 176–7. For *harīsa* premises in Iraqi al-Wāsiṭ see below, pt. II, chapter III.1. "Public consumption," p. 356; for *harīsa* as praised in the Abbasid poetry see Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 32. On porridges in the ancient Mesopotamian cookery see Nasrallah, *Annals*, 50.

[146] Pistachio, date, and rice versions did not require wheat.

[147] See al-Baghdadi, *Ifādah*, 185 (fol. 46*r*), where "pots of lead [*qudūr ar-ruṣaṣ*] such as those of the *harīsa* maker" are mentioned.

[148] Ash-Shayzarī points out that the proper recipe for street *harīsa* should include both lamb and beef, in proportion 2 to 3; *Nihāya*, 36–7 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 60–1). See also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 206, where, apart from dietetic properties of the dish, also its mode of preparation is discussed. For recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 72; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 366, 367; *Kanz*, 274, n. 31; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 11a; *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 475; also an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XII, 145–6. However, the two recipes for *harīsa* as included in an-Nuwayrī's *Nihāya* do not feature ordinary dishes but medicaments meant to increase sexual potency; hence, probably, the additional ingredients they call for, such as hummus, beans, broad beans, coconut, goose and duck fat, or galingale and egg yolk. For some more details on *harīsa* see also below, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 196–7.

[149] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 366–7.

When the pot was opened in the morning, the contents was beaten until it gained the consistency of a smooth paste. Then fresh melted sheep's tail fat could be poured over the surface. The dish, optionally sprinkled with cumin and ground Chinese cinnamon, was served with *murrī* sauce or lemon juice. The Jews of al-Fusṭāṭ also prepared *harīsa* which, owing to the long process of warming, became their Sabbath specialty. Interestingly, their dish, which Goitein calls "medieval hamburger (ground meat and wheat fried in much fat)" was not identical with *harīsa* we know from Arab sources.[150]

This time- and labor-demanding dish had a number of easier versions. One of them was *qamḥiyya*, or "wheat dish." *Qamḥiyya* however, made simply by cooking wheat grains with meat,[151] could not match *harīsa*, even if ennobled by addition of spices. With the rustic chic so visible in it, *qamḥiyya* was still only a peasant fare inserted into urban menu. The same refers to a preparation featured in one of the recipes for *ḥinṭiyya*, literally also a "wheat dish." The recipe, written in the tenth/sixteenth-century Damascus, instructed to "take wheat and boil it in a little water until it gives up its starch" and then to "add water and put meat in it."[152] Although the anonymous author of *Waṣf* supplemented the recipe with some suggestions meant to upgrade the quality of the preparation by more careful and complex treatment of wheat grains, the final result still constituted just a "wheat dish."[153] The above remarks do not, however, concern the *ḥinṭiyya* dish as described in al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*. Although basically also made of meat, wheat, and spices, the Abbasid gourmets' contribution to its refinement allows one to consider the dish as an urban rather than peasant food. Al-Baghdādī's version read:

[150] According to Goitein, "the *harīs*(*a*) is a semolina dough which is stuffed with meat and fat, such as lamb's tail, and spices. During the long process of warming, the dough becomes saturated with the taste of meat, fat and spices, unlike regular *harīsa* that is consumed shortly after preparation." See Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 115; *Daily Life*, 227.

[151] For recipes see *Kanz*, 45, n. 100; 267, n. 8; *Wuṣla*, 595 (where wheat is cooked in milk instead of water, but where no meat ingredient is mentioned); Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 8a, 11a, 32a; *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 474.

[152] *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 474. For recipes see also al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 54, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 49; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 334–5. Recipes for *ḥinṭiyya* (or "wheat dish") as included in *Kanz*, 46, n. 104 and 269, n. A14, call for rice instead of wheat.

[153] The recommendation reads as follows: "a trustworthy person has mentioned that wheat should be boiled in water separately, and when the water has taken on the yellowness of the wheat, the water is filtered from it with a filter. That is before the grains open and split. Then throw the wheat in cold water, and throw the boiled fat meat which is half done, on it." *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 334–5.

> Cut fat meat into middling pieces and fry lightly in dissolved tail . . . Then throw in a little salt, brayed dry coriander, and some pieces of cinnamon. When nearly cooked, increase water as required by the wheat, and add a little dry dill. When properly boiling, take sufficient shelled wheat, crush fine in a mortar, wash, and add to the pot . . . Sprinkle with fine-brayed cumin and cinnamon, and if desired add squeezed lemon."[154]

Yet, *qamḥiyya* or *ḥinṭiyya*, however simple, were not the crudest of Egyptian wheat preparations. This honor should go to *nayda*—even coarser, even less refined, and very much "peculiar to Egypt"—as a medieval Iraqi traveler observed.[155] Indeed, *nayda*, "a sweet dish of wheat," was not—to use the words of another traveler—"prepared anywhere else except here [i.e. in Cairo] and in other places in Egypt."[156] Coarse as it was, it nevertheless seems to have had its enthusiasts abroad—Ibn Iyās maintained *nayda* was exported to Syria.[157] "Red turning to black, it is sweet, though not exceedingly. It is prepared with wheat which has germinated and then been cooked until its substance is completely deposited in the water. After that it is clarified, and they cook it until a heavy deposit is left. When it is at this point they put in as much flour as it will take and remove it from the fire." The dish, if prepared this way, was called *naydat al-būsh* and sold "at the price of bread."[158] There was also a more expensive and better version of the dish: called *nayda maʿqūda* (coagulated *nayda*), it was prepared by cooking wheat until it solidified, without adding flour.

The above description, noted down by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī in the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, is probably the only historical record dealing with *nayda* in such an informative way. Oddly enough,

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[154] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 54, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 49. Cf. also recipes for other dishes whose recipes called for wheat grain, such as *farīkiyya* "green wheat dish", a dish made of stewed fat meat boiled with wheat and seasoned with coriander, cumin, Chinese cinnamon, and melted tail fat (*Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 335; also 368 and al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 54, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 49–50); or *tannūriyya* "oven dish", made of fat meat, cut up medium and boiled, then mixed with hulled wheat which was five times as more than meat, spices, salt, water, and cooked in the *tannūr*, where it was left on a gentle fire for the night (*Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368; also al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 73); or *kabīs*, a cinnamon-flavored oven preparation of fat meat, chickpeas and wheat (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69–70, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 73; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368).

[155] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 (fol. 47*l*).

[156] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 29.

[157] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 42–3.

[158] Al-Baghdādī compares the mode of its preparation to making the *khabīṣ* pudding; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 (fol. 47*l*).

the name of this unique Egyptian dish, still popular in Cairo as late as in the ninth/fifteenth century,[159] is not to be found in the form described by al-Baghdādī in any of the known Cairene cookery books. *Naydat al-khulafāʾ*, or "*nayda* of the caliphs" has nothing to do with the genuine, country-style *nayda*, as its recipe calls for bread crumbs, sugar, honey, sesame oil, and pistachios.[160]

The absence of *nayda* from a majority of cookbooks might easily be justified by the primitive character of the dish and its low social status. However, such a justification appears inadequate. After all, other foodstuffs of the peasants or of the city's poor, such as salted fish (*ṣīr*), salty fish pastes (*ṣaḥnāʾ*), dried yoghurt (*kishk*), local salty cheese, bread steeped in broth, "wheat dish" etc., were adapted, in a more or less modified form, by the "bourgeois" food culture. What seems to explain the problem in a more satisfactory way is that *nayda*, "a sort of ersatz sugar" of the poor,[161] was indeed nothing more than that. With its sweetness produced by means of malting the wheat grains,[162] *nayda* as a confection made only for the poor. Sweetish rather than sweet, it was definitely not sweet enough to satisfy the palates of those who could afford regular honey/sugar sweetmeats.[163]

The medieval Islamic world knew, probably since remote antiquity, two wheat products which, originally of a very local nature, with time, became basic and most distinctive food items for the vast territories covering most of the Middle East and North Africa. Widespread though they were, the two products maintained their regional character: couscous dominated the territories spreading west of Egypt, while burghul prevailed in the

159 Of the sources in which *nayda* is mentioned the earliest are those by Ibn al-Kindī (the fourth/tenth century), *Faḍāʾil Miṣr al-Maḥrūsa* (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1997), 50, and al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 203. The remaining records confirm *nayda* was popularly consumed in Cairo of the Mamluk epoch; see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (the eighth/fourteenth century), *Maʿālim*, 174; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 31; al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 105 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación;" Ibn Sūdūn (the ninth/fifteenth century), *Nuzha*, 66, where *naydat aṣ-Ṣaʿīd*, or "*nayda* from Upper Egypt" is mentioned. Cf. also Marín, "Literatura y gastronomía," 142, 149, 156.

160 *Wuṣla*, 663.

161 As Ashtor called it; Ashtor, "Diet," 132.

162 Or, in other words, converting the grain starch into sugars (principally maltose) by means of making the grains germinate the way it is done in beer production.

163 Actually, the argument that *nayda* was not too sweet a preparation (for malting makes the grains only mildly sweet) contradicts the thesis formed by Ashtor, who maintained that *nayda* was one of "extremely sweet jams," prepared "without sugar or honey but very sweet" (Ashtor, "Diet," 132). However, al-Baghdādī, who apparently consumed *nayda* while in Egypt, noted it was "not very sweet" ("ḥilw lā fī-l-ghāya;" al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 / fol. 47*l*/), which seems to confirm the correctness of the argument above.

region lying east of it. Michael Abdalla observes that the expansion of burghul in the western Middle East ends exactly where the domination of couscous begins. He maintains that the area of burghul consumption covers, roughly, the lands which in the seventh century B.C.E. were occupied by the Assyrian state.[164]

Indeed, the correctness of Abdalla's theses can hardly be questioned. It should be added, however, that the Egyptians, although they had experienced Assyrian occupation,[165] seem to have never included burghul in their diet. The historical sources referring to medieval Egypt or Cairo are silent about this specialty. Produced from hard-wheat varieties by grinding grains which were boiled and dried in the sun, burghul was in fact a rural, regional and seasonal food meant as provision for winter.[166] The Egyptians clearly did not care for wheat processed this way. Its diffusion westward seems to have stopped on the eastern frontier of Egypt which thus became a kind of buffer zone between the couscous- and burghul-dominated territories.

Resolutely rejecting the Middle Eastern groats-like specialty, Egypt seems to have been more positively disposed towards what was coming from the west. Originally the distinctive food of the Berbers and today the primary staple food throughout the Maghreb, couscous (*kuskusū*) consists of granules of about two millimeters in diameter, made of semolina flour. Today, the traditional process of its production involves "a bowl of flour sprinkled intermittently with salted water as the fingers of the right hand rake through it in sweeping, circular movements, causing balls of dough to coagulate. The granules are also rubbed between the palms or against the side of the bowl to shape them." When dried, they "are sieved several times to obtain granules of uniform size."[167] Couscous is generally cooked in steam, in a metal or earthenware colander sealed with paste to a pot in which the stew is being cooked. A dish "call'd Cuscasow," which Richard Pococke saw eaten by "the Moors" in the twelfth/eighteenth-century Egypt, was not much different from the contemporary version: "made with flour temper'd with water, and rolled in the hands into small pieces,

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[164] Abdalla, *Kultura*, 85.
[165] Assyria occupied Egypt from 671 to 663 B.C.E.
[166] For details on the production and use of burghul see Abdalla, *Kultura*, 85–104. Also Claudia Roden, *The New Book of Middle Eastern Food* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 366–70.
[167] Charles Perry, "Couscous and its Cousins," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 235; Perry suggests that *kuskusū* was originally a small noodle; see "Couscous and its Cousins," 238. See also *EI2*, V, "Kuskusū" by Ch. Pellat; Roden, *New Book*, 372–4.

and being put in a cullender, over a boiling pot stopped close round, it is dressed with the steam, and then they put butter to it."[168]

The precise date of its introduction to Egypt, as well as its early history in general, remain unclear. Although the Fatimid epoch was the period of the intensive Berbers' infiltration of Egypt and their settlement in the al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo area, sources dating back to that time do not mention couscous. This may indicate that by that time couscous, if consumed by the Berber troops and settlers at all, was their specific ethnic dish. According to Charles Perry, however, "the suspicious silence" about couscous in sources from before the seventh/thirteenth century in general suggests that couscous arose among the Berbers of the North Africa only as late as between the fifth/eleventh and seventh/thirteenth centuries.[169] Be that as it may, the continuous presence of the Maghrebian community (not too numerous but prominent, distinct, and tending to retain its own traditions) in medieval Cairo must have contributed to the relative popularization of couscous in the city.[170]

Far from becoming commonly appreciated by the Cairenes, by the Mamluk times couscous was recognizable enough to attract the attention of some of the authors of cookbooks who included recipes for couscous dishes in the books they compiled. One very complicated recipe for a spicy dish with meat, eggplant and couscous made of North African semolina, is to be found in *Waṣf*. Of the two others, both of which are given in *Wuṣla*, one mentions the traditional granules, made by stirring water-sprinkled flour by hand and cooked by steaming, while the other refers to short noodles made of stiff dough and cooked by boiling.[171] Compared with the number of recipes for rice or wheat dishes, three recipes for couscous is not much. The number of the recipes, coupled with the impression that all three of them were included in the cookbooks as oddities rather than

[168] Pococke, *Description*, 183. Cf. Tadeusz Lewicki, *West African Food in the Middle Ages according to Arabic Sources* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 158.

[169] Perry, "Couscous," 237–8.

[170] Most of the Maghrebians living in Cairo occupied the area of Ibn Ṭulūn mosque and madrasa Shaykhūniyya west of the Citadel as well as the area of al-Azhar and madrasa Muʾayyadiyya in the northeastern Cairo; see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 74–7, 158–9; Blachere, "Agglomération," 15, quoting Ibn Jubayr; Raymond, *Cairo*, 38 (discussing the ethnic "quarters" of the Fatimid city), 211. See *Wuṣla*, 609, and al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 94 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," where the author uses the term "the food of the Maghrebians" to make the reader sure in which milieu certain dishes were prepared and consumed.

[171] For recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 344–6; *Wuṣla*, 608, 610; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 13a. *Kanz* does not include a recipe for couscous.

as known and appreciated meals, suggests that couscous never truly won over the Cairenes' palates. Sparse as they are, these recipes nevertheless confirm that couscous, unlike burghul, was to some degree accepted and consumed in medieval (and later) Cairo,[172] if only by the "Moors."

Interestingly, couscous and burghul were not the only wheat grain dishes out of favor with the local population. This might also have been the case of *jashīsh*, or ordinary ground/crushed wheat (or grains in general) of which dishes called *jashīsh(a)* were made. In its genuine Arab form *jashīsha* was made of ground wheat cooked together with meat and dates to acquire a thick, porridge-like consistency. The dish was said to have been served by the Prophet to one of his wives.[173] As a result of the Islamic conquest, the dish was carried by the Arabs as far as al-Andalus, where it was significantly modified: Andalusian *jashīsh* was either ground wheat cooked with *ḥulb* (fenugreek?)[174] and colored with saffron or, in another version, ground wheat simply cooked in milk and little water with no sea-

[172] Similar conclusions may, in fact, be referred to other kinds of Middle Eastern noodles, of which most were of Persian origin and which are mentioned in the cookery books only occasionally. And thus recipes calling for *rishtā*, a spaghetti-like fresh-made pasta can be found in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 54, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 48; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 334; *Wuṣla*, 606–7; *Kanz*, 119, n. 313, 126, n. 333 (where the cook is instructed to cut *kunāfa* the way *rishtā* is cut); for *ʿiṭriyya*, "a small soup noodle of Greek origin which resembled the Italian *orzo*," see Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 53, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 48; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 333, 337; al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 207; for *shaʿīriyya*, or vermicelli, see *Wuṣla*, 608; *Kanz* 50, n. 117; *ṭuṭmāj* noodles are mentioned in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 324. All of these are also to be found in the post-medieval Damascene *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*, in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 471–3. Contemporary scholars are not unanimous regarding precise definition of particular kinds of noodles. For more details on noodles see Charles Perry's comments for Arberry's translation of "Baghdad Cookery Book," 53, n. 3, 54, n. 1; and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 48, n. 2; idem, "Notes on Persian Pasta," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 251–5; idem, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 470.

[173] Ibn Manẓūr (Ibn Mukarram), *Lisān al-ʿArab*, VI, 273–4.

[174] Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 96 translates *ḥulb* as "Anis;" according to Moses Maimonides, anise, or *anīsūn*, was identical with *ḥubba ḥulwa*; see *Moses Maimonides' Glossary of Drug Names: Maimonides' Medical Writings. Translated and annotated from Max Mayerhof's French edition by Fred Rosner*, Haifa 1995, 17, n. 19. According to al-Isrāʾīlī, however, *anīsūn* was identical with *ḥulba ḥulwa*; see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 380. None of the authors suggests, though, that anise was identical with *ḥulb*; at the same time, the term "*ḥulba*," that is "*ḥulb*" with the feminine ending, designates fenugreek, and not anise. See also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 202, n. 1. According to Martin Levey, in the Maghrib *anīsūn* is known as *ḥabba ḥulwa*; see Martin Levey, *The Medical Formulary or Aqrābādhīn of Al-Kindī: Translated with a Study of its Materia Medica by Martin Levey* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 237, n. 26.

soning at all.[175] As for Egypt, cracked wheat preparations were known and consumed there in the pre-Islamic times.[176] Nevertheless, medieval Egypt seems not to have particularly fancied this kind of food, at least not in urban centers. The Cairene traces of *jashīsh* are, in fact, very few. One of them is to be found in the Geniza documents, where the profession of *jashshāsh*, or *jashīsh* maker, is mentioned a few times.[177] The other is a recipe included in one of the medieval Egyptian cookery books, where crushed and ground wheat grains are used to make Khorasanian *kishk*.[178] Apparently, Cairo preferred to stick with bread.

2. Meat[179]

"The lordiest food of the people of this world and of Paradise is meat," the Prophet is alleged to have said.[180] Indeed, with Islam positively encouraging meat-eating, it probably should not be surprising that in the Arabic-Islamic world meatless food was not considered a real meal.[181] The superior value accorded to meat did not mean, however, that in the cuisine of this

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175 See at-Tujībī, *Faḍālat al-Khiwān*, 61–2, where recipes for *jashīsh* made of millet, barley or rice are also to be found; also *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh fī-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, ed. and trans. Ambrosio Huici Miranda as *Traduccion española de un manuscrito anónimo del siglo XIII sobre la cocina hispano-magribi* (Madrid, 1966), 218.

176 Cf. Athenaeus (the third century C.E.) whose report on groats made in the Egyptian manner and served at Greek wedding feasts suggests the good quality of the product; *Deipnosophists*, IV, 131. At the same time, however, Pliny (the first century C.E.) is clear about the "contemptible quality" of Egyptian groats; *Naturalis Historia*, XVIII, XIX, 109–113; see Darby, Ghalioungui and Grivetti, *Food*, II, 488, 528.

177 Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 115. Goitein suggests that the *jashshāsh* as mentioned in the Geniza papers is a dealer of the ready-to-eat dish named *jashīsh*; but *jashshāsh*, in theory, could also mean a dealer of *jashīsh*, or crushed wheat.

178 *Kanz*, 193, n. 524; see also a recipe for *kāmakh* in *Kanz*, 185, n. 501 and Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 24a.

179 The consumption of mice, foxes, rabbits, dogs, donkeys, etc. is not discussed in the present chapter, as meat of these animals was not included—except in the periods of the most disastrous famines—in the daily menu of an average medieval Cairene. The question of cannibalism is not dealt with for the same reasons.

180 *Sunan Ibn Māja*, "Al-Aṭʿima" 3297; Engl. trans. in Charles Perry, "Elements of Arab Feasting," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 228; also Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1960), II, 107; Engl. trans. in Asaf A.A. Fyzee, *Compendium of Fatimid Law* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1969), 130, reads: "The chief of the viands in this world and the hereafter is meat."

181 This was not valid for the Jewish culinary culture; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 248–9. For a more detailed discussion on the role of meat in the Arabic-Islamic diet, and on meat-free food, see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 58–61, 63–4; and below, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 253–64. Cf. Perry, "Elements," 228.

generally carnivorous food culture meat played the role of primary staple. True, many historical records indicate that meat was an important element of the Cairenes' daily diet and suggest a relatively high consumption of it. It is enough to mention countless remarks of both Western and Arab eyewitnesses referring to meat and meat dishes sold in the city streets.[182] At the same time, however, a number of foreigners who visited Egypt in pre-modern times noted that the Egyptians did not eat too much meat, while others pointed out that in the hot summertime the meat dishes were not really sought after.[183]

There was no universal pattern for meat consumption in medieval Cairo. It varied not only according to the season of the year but also according to social class. Eliyahu Ashtor, who tried to establish how much meat medieval Egyptian workers, artisans, and shopkeepers could buy with a minimum salary, found out—not surprisingly—that in the fifth/eleventh and eighth/fourteenth centuries laborers with the lowest salary were not able to buy enough meat to supply necessary proteins and fats. At the same time, Ashtor's research shows—not surprisingly—that the better-off segment of population, including specialized workers, petty merchants, etc., did not share the concerns of their poorer compatriots.[184] Indeed, Jūdar, the fictitious Cairene fisherman featured in one of the *Arabian Nights* narratives, could earn enough to buy meat for four persons every day.[185] In his calculations, however, Ashtor apparently did not consider the type of meat, a factor which fundamentally conditioned the price and, therefore, the availability of meat. Those who enjoyed appropriate means would go for mutton, the most expensive meat in the market, and would rather not eat beef, goat, or camel meat.[186] At the same time, however, the low-paid

[182] For references see above, chapter I.3.B. "Food producers, their wares, and market control," pp. 101–4.

[183] This was observed, for example, by the Palestinian traveler al-Muqaddasī, in his *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 205 and by Antonius Gonzales in his *Voyage*, 185–6 ("They eat very little meat, almost exclusively the mutton, though some also eat chicken." These words were repeated some years later by Edward Brown, *Voyage*, 181); see also Pococke, who noted that the Egyptians "seldom eat meat;" Pococke, *Description*, 193; also ibid., 182, where the author observed that "it is said that in the hot Hamseen season in the month of April and May, they eat, for the most part, nothing but dishes made of pulse and herbs, and also fish... the great heats taking away their appetites for all sorts of meat."

[184] Ashtor, "Diet," 137–144.

[185] "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," Night 608.

[186] For the differences between the prices of mutton and beef and a discussion of meat prices as transmitted in the Mamluk-era chronicles, see Ashtor, "Prix," 66–7; interestingly, Ashtor's calculations show that in the period following the Black Death the nutrition of the working-class improved significantly, especially among those with the lowest income.

laborers who could not afford a nice mutton fillet, were not necessarily meat- or protein-hungry. In fact, many of them seem to have been able to satisfy their appetites with a cheap dish of cooked sheep's heads/trotters or with camel, buffalo, or goat flesh.

As already mentioned,[187] the meat available in the city markets had its hierarchy. Mutton was absolutely superior to all other kinds and its position was unmatched. Beef came second, while goat meat was for those who could not afford beef. But the Cairenes' choice was not limited to those kinds. One could also have camel, buffalo, and horse meat, which, however, were excluded from the menu of the respectable urbanites. Camel meat and buffalo meat, presumably regarded as suitable for peasants and Bedouins, were placed below goat meat in the local meat hierarchy. In effect, they were also cheap enough to be affordable for the better-off of the city's poor. As for horse meat, the Mamluks' special, its consumption was out of the question for the local civilian population. Of the remaining kinds of meat, there were also, albeit occasionally, game animals, mostly gazelle, hunted for pleasure by the rich and by the poor out of necessity.

The hierarchy of meat as observed by the Cairenes could, at least partly, be a consequence of some ancient beliefs and nutritional habits, of both local and foreign provenience. At the same time, however, the reason why medieval Cairene urbanites categorized meat this way seems to have been related to the dietary lore absorbed by the medieval Islamic world as a part of the Greek medical doctrine. According to the dietary treatise written by the philosopher-dietician Isḥāq al-Isrā'īlī, meats were divided into two categories. Mutton, goat meat, and beef made one category, while donkey, horse, mule, and camel meat belonged to the other (water-buffalo is not mentioned at all). The most obvious difference between the two categories was that one of them included riding/pack beasts, while the other consisted of animals which were farmed for their meat and/or milk. The difference was absolutely crucial, as the working animals were not grazed on opened pastures but were kept in stables and fed artificially. Moreover, they were butchered not when they gained weight or age which classified them as appropriate for consumption, but because they grew old or sick enough to be unsuitable for work. From dietary point of view, meat

[187] See above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 61–2.

of such animals was of inferior quality, both in taste and with regard to health concerns.[188]

But the hierarchy of meat was not always one and the same in Egypt. The millennia-long and complex history of local meat consumption included a number of turning points. As far as its medieval period was concerned, the Arab conquest of the early 20s/640s was probably the most meaningful. The consequences of the post-conquest reevaluation of meat consumption were manifold. One of them was the shift from proscribing sheep to making mutton the most desired meat. The other was the shift from the consumption of pork to its prohibition. These two phenomena entirely changed the ranking which had been applied in ancient Egypt: beef, in antiquity apparently the meat of the elites, now gave its place to mutton and in turn occupied the place of pork which up to that time had been the meat of the more common people.[189]

Not surprisingly, pork was not much coveted in medieval Cairo. The story of its consumption in Egypt is, nevertheless, intriguing, if only because pork never quite disappeared from medieval records. In fact, a total avoidance of pork as brought by the Arab-Muslim conquerors in form of the Qurʾanic ban (the Muslims simply picked up the Jewish taboo) was for the Egyptians a rather new experience. In the Pre-Dynastic period, pork was consumed in great quantities in Lower Egypt. In Pharaonic Egypt, pork was avoided only periodically.[190] As for the Post-Dynastic, or Graeco-Roman period, the evidence is rather confusing. Some authors, like Plutarch, maintain it was abhorred. Others, like Pliny or Athenaeus, report on large herds of farmed swine and on popular consumption of pork.[191] This

[188] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 521–37. For discussion of meat of various animals in the context of its properties and relevance to human health see also, for example, al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 21–3 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 102–5). Interestingly, in Byzantium the term "meat" was limited to the flesh of pigs, sheep, and goats. Cattle did not provide meat but were regarded as working animals; see Kislinger, "Christians of the East," 197.

[189] Interestingly, there is no evidence that donkey, horse, or camel were eaten in Egypt either in the Dynastic or in the Graeco-Roman period; see Darby, *Food*, I, 235, 237, 254. For the discussion on forbidden and allowed kinds of meat in Islam see Michael Cook, "Early Islamic Dietary Law," *JSAI* 7 (1986): 217–77; on various kinds of meat as viewed by the Islamic law see also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 166–7.

[190] There seem to have been two major periods of pork avoidance in antiquity: first one which occurred after the conquest of the northern land by the southerners and the subsequent unification of the country (ca. 3200 B.C.E.), and second, which started some time after the Rammeside period (ca. 1085 B.C.E.) and before the first Persian conquest (525 B.C.E.); see Darby, *Food*, I, 172, 199.

[191] Darby, *Food*, I, 191.

inconsistency notwithstanding, some scholars are of the opinion that pork was by that time "the standard meat of Egypt" consumed by both the army and the civilians.[192] The situation might have remained unchanged under the Byzantine occupation; in fact, there is no ground to claim that in the period directly preceding the Islamic conquest the Egyptian Christians, either Copts or Melkites, avoided pork consumption.[193]

The Arab conquest initiated new attitudes. It must have taken some time, however, before the Qurʾanic bans became accepted countrywide. If we are to believe al-Muqaddasī's mocking words, in fourth/tenth-century Egypt one could still encounter pig herds.[194] The Muslim conquerors apparently did not particularly press the local population to exterminate pigs, nor did they impose pork avoidance on Egyptian Christians.[195] Since pork, unlike the religiously forbidden wine, was fervently and voluntarily abhorred by the Muslims, there was no real need to activate propaganda against the pig sties or pig rearers. The Egyptian Christians, however, seem to have accepted the Islamic pork restrictions in a somewhat spontaneous way, be it because of the general disgust which prevailed towards this kind meat or because the Islamic pork avoidance fitted some earlier local tradition of which we have no knowledge.[196] The acceptance of pork avoidance by

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[192] Bagnall, *Egypt*, 29.

[193] See Darby, *Food*, I, 200–1.

[194] "The dew is the rain of the Egyptians, the chanting caravan leader is their bird . . . river mussels are their food, chickpeas is their snack, *ḥalūm* is their cheese, *nayda* is their sweet, and pigs are their herds, and their oath is unbelief;" al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 205–6.

[195] It should be kept in mind that in Islam the prohibition of eating pig implies the illegality of buying it or of raising the animal. Its presence near a person praying renders void the prayer (see *EI2,* V, "Khinzīr" by F. Vire). Moreover, it is only in the view of the Malikī school that the pig, when alive, does not soil; see *EI2,* III, "Ḥadath," by G.H. Bousquet.

[196] Cf. the words of Edward Lane, who in the late nineteenth century noticed that "the Copts almost universally abstain from eating swine's flesh, not because they consider it unlawful . . . but, as they say, on account of the filthiness of the animal. I should think, however, that this abstinence is rather to be attributed to a prejudice derived from their heathen ancestors. The flesh of the wild boar is often eaten by them;" Lane, *Manners*, 534. For a discussion on Coptic pork avoidance see Darby, *Food*, I, 200–1.

As William Darby indicates, the frequent attributing of the origin of pork avoidance—as reflected in the Mosaic and Qurʾanic bans—to a collective experience related to contracting trichinosis is a naïve over-simplification of the question, for the simple reason that the ancients could not understand the aetiology of the disease. The cause and effect relationship between ingestion of undercooked pork and trichinosis was not established until the nineteenth century; therefore, the health motives should not be taken under consideration while searching for the origins of pork avoidance. In his discussion on Mosaic pork ban (which appears in the Bible only after Exodus), Darby points out to other possible reasons. The ban might have been intended to set the Israelis apart from their Egyptian masters, or to reject the association between swine and the false gods of agriculture. Another

Egyptian Christians could have taken place ca. fourth/tenth century, when the local Christian-Muslim contacts and interactions intensified due to increased Arabization and the slow but ongoing Islamization of Egypt.[197] In fact, the Arabic-Islamic records referring to pork consumption in medieval Cairo are extremely scarce and, due to their hearsay character, do not provide a reliable answer as to whether pork was eaten at all or not.[198]

As for horse meat, the story of its consumption in Cairo is not less peculiar. In the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, a Florentine Simone Sigoli, otherwise a not very trustworthy observer, maintained he saw "horse, donkey and camel flesh, cooked and raw" sold in Alexandria in "appointed places."[199] Two points are intriguing in his remark: one, that

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view suggests that pig abhorrence aimed at a discrimination from pig worshippers. For a detailed study of the question see Darby, *Food*, I, 171–209. See also Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 158–9, where the opinions of Mary Douglas and Eugene Hunn are recalled. Douglas showed that animals tabooed in Leviticus and Deuteronomy are mostly anomalous—cloven hoofed but not cud chewing, in the case of pigs. Hunn showed that the pig is banned because it eats blood and animal and carrion. All the creatures banned in the Old Testament are carnivorous or scavengers, and all the carnivorous and scavengers in the Near East are banned. The animals specifically listed as clean are those that are unequivocally vegetarian.

[197] For the discussion of the processes of Arabization and Islamization in Egypt see Wilfgong, "Non-Muslim Communities," 175–97. It is tempting to assume that pork consumption, and thus pig raising, were almost nonexistent in Egypt of that time. After all, considering the uncompromising attitude of the caliph al-Ḥākim to foodstuffs banned by Qurʾanic or Mosaic law, it can be taken for granted that if such activities were actually practiced, particularly in Cairo or its vicinities, the caliph would undertake serious actions against them. For more details on al-Ḥākim's food policy see below, part III, chapter V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*," pp. 473–4.

[198] One of the few allusions to pork consumption in medieval Cairo is included in al-Maqrīzī's account which deals with the imprisonment and execution of an-Nashw (the inspector of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's private treasury), in whose place a significant reserve of pig's meat and 4,000 jars of wine were reportedly found; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 482. The fact that an-Nashw was a popularly hated official and a convert from Christianity should not be neglected in evaluating this record. Another record relating to the consumption of pork is to be found in al-Maqrīzī's description of the sinful activities practiced by the Franks in their hostel located in Khizānat al-Bunūd in the center of Cairo. These activities were to include, apart from the "standard" misdeeds (i.e. prostitution and wine business) also the fact that "pig's meat hung there over the counter [just like sheep meat in the bazaar] and was sold without shame;" al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 640–41; *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 148. However, such a situation seems to be highly improbable, if only because the sale of pork in this place would involve either pig-raising in the center of Islamic Cairo or transporting the animals through the most crowded streets of the city streets. Besides, considering the Copts' avoidance of pork and, therefore, the presumable absence of demand for this meat, the farming of pigs would not make sense at all. The accusatory character of the account and its propagandist overtone only add to negative evaluation of its reliability. For more details on Khizānat al-Bunūd see below, part III, chapter VI.3. "Alcohol and Its Consumption in Medieval Cairo," pp. 507–8, 539.

[199] Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162.

horse and donkey meat was sold in Alexandria at all; and two, that meat of riding/pack animals was sold in places other than the regular butchers' shops. Actually, similar places might have existed in Cairo, too; however, they seem insufficiently documented. Nevertheless, horse meat was consumed in Cairo, but the phenomenon was generally limited to the Mamluk milieu.[200] It is probably impossible to confirm whether this dietary habit was practiced by all groups of the Mamluk society. The records with evidence of the horse meat consumption refer only to festive occasions celebrated by Mamluk elite circles of both the Baḥrī and the Circassian epoch.[201] As for eating of horse meat by the rank-and-file mamluks, it seems rather improbable that the daily meat rations received by them could include this kind of fare.[202] Leo Africanus pointed out that although eating of horse meat was, due to the Ḥanafī doctrine to which they subscribed, religiously permitted for the Turks (i.e. Mamluks in Egypt), it was not a popular custom among them.[203] It is difficult to define whether Africanus's remark referred to the early tenth/sixteenth century only, or was valid for the Mamluk state in general. In the Mamluk state, horses were in high demand—the Mamluk army needed such quantities that Syria, Lower Egypt, and Upper Egypt could not provide enough of them. Great numbers were imported from outside Egypt, mostly from Bahrain,

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[200] Ibn Iyās's short account of the 696/1296–7 agricultural disaster and famine caused by the low Nile is one of the very few, if not the only, record pointing to horses being eaten by the local population; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 390–1. According to the record, in the year 696/1296–7 people were forced to eat dogs, cats, donkeys, mules, horses and camels.

[201] See, for example, al-Maqrīzī's account of a giant party held by sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl in 692/1292–3 to celebrate the circumcision of his son and of his nephew; according to the chronicler, meat of 500 horses (apart from thousands of other animals) was served on the occasion (*Khiṭaṭ*, II, 211); see also the same author's accounts of Mamluk wedding parties held in 727/1326–7 and 732/1331–2 (*Sulūk*, II/2, 288 and 346); also Ibn Iyās's records depicting the party held by sultan Barqūq in 800/1398 when 20 horses were slaughtered for the occasion (*Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501); the wedding party of *al-amīr al-kabīr* Nawrūz held in 804/1401–2, when 16 horses were slaughtered (*Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 638–9); or the banquet held on the occasion of inauguration of sultan Barqūq's madrasa in 788/1386 (*Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 372).

[202] Cf. the account by al-Maqrīzī, according to whom soldiers' provision included, in 715/1315–16, grain, chicken, mutton, clover, *kishk*, lentils, and *kaʿk*-biscuits (*Sulūk*, II, 1149). The food rations of the Mamluk soldiers were discussed at length by David Ayalon in his "System of Payment," 258–260; however, the author did not give indications regarding the kind of meat consumed by the soldiers.

[203] L'Africain, *Description*, 517. For the *ḥadīths* referring to consumption of horse meat see also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 166. For the references to horse meat consumption among the Turks see Günay Kut, "Turkish Culinary Culture," in Pekin and Sümer, *Timeless Tastes*, 38, 75–6; also Tuğrul Şavkay, "The Cultural and Historical Context of Turkish Cuisine," in Pekin and Sümer, *Timeless Tastes*, 80.

Barqa in Cyrenaica, and the Maghreb.[204] The horse in Egypt (and in the Arab world in general) was never bred for meat. Nevertheless, considering quantities of horses stationed in the capital and the intensive way they were used, some animals must have from time to time been butchered when useless due to sicknesses or wounds. Quite probably, this was the only source of horse meat.

As for camel meat, its share in the Cairene culinary culture cannot be clearly defined. Actually, it is certain that camels abounded in Cairo, if only because tens of thousands of these animals were used to provide the city with potable water which they transported from the Nile, as well as to carry goods and merchandise of all possible kinds. Moreover, it can also be taken for granted that the city market was well supplied in camel's meat. It hung in the bazaars in rows,[205] while Cairene cooks, apart from sheep's flesh and beef, apparently cooked also camel's flesh.[206] Yet, it seems that camel meat was not a favorite among the city's inhabitants. Possibly the attitude of the Cairenes was not very much different from that of the Egyptian Copts visiting the Arab camp of the victorious ʿAmr Ibn al-ʿĀṣ soon after the conquest. Treated by the Arabs with a coarse dish of camel meat cooked in water and salt, the Copts could not hide their disgust. This, by the way, might support the thesis of William Darby, according to whom camel "seems never to have been eaten in Egypt before the Arab invasion."[207] As for the times after the invasion, camel meat was apparently ignored by the urbanites of means as an unhealthy fare of the Bedouins and never found its way to any of the Arabic-Islamic cookbooks or tables. Due to its low price, however, camel meat must have attracted numerous clientele in Cairo, mostly among the poorer part of the city's population.[208]

[204] See Ayalon, "System of Payment," 263–271.

[205] See, for example, ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 27, 34 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 52, 58); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 34–6.

[206] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109–10.

[207] Darby, *Food*, I, 254. Interestingly, modern Copts seemed to have followed their predecessors' attitude: in the nineteenth century Edward Lane noted down that "Camels flesh they [i.e. Copts] consider unlawful, probably for no better reason than that of its being eaten by the Muslims;" Lane, *Manners*, 534.

[208] See ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 34 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 58); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 173; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6; Harant, *Voyage*, 198; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 169.

Although goat is not a working animal, its meat was rather unpopular, possibly because of its "unpalatable smell."[209] The Arabic-Islamic cookery books rarely recommended goat meat as an ingredient. The exceptions included a recipe for "[something] tasteful" (*malīḥa*),[210] as well as a few dishes which called for meat of the suckling kid (*jady*).[211] The major evidence for its actual consumption in medieval Cairo are probably the *ḥisba* manuals whose authors instruct the butchers to mark goat meat with saffron and avoid mixing it with other meats.[212] Goat meat—like camel meat, sheep's heads or trotters cooked in the market—was the food of those with meager income. Or, to paraphrase the words of the author of the *Delectable War*, it was the food of the poor who, having finally found a source of income, could afford at least the cheap meat of goat.[213]

Historical evidence referring to buffalo meat and its consumption in medieval Cairo is somewhat vague. Interestingly, this applies to accounts which refer not only to Egypt, but also to medieval Arab sources in general.[214] This absence of records may mean that either buffalo meat was classified by the contemporaneous authors as beef and, consequently, was recorded as such, or that it was consumed by the Arabic-Islamic world—medieval Egyptian urbanites included—on an insignificant scale, if at all.

Water-buffalo or, more precisely, river buffalo (*jamūs*), an animal so typical of the Nile valley landscape of today, appeared in Egypt only after the Arab conquest. In the Middle Ages the Egyptian water-buffalo,

[209] Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 58 (Ar. *zuhūma*; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 34). As for antiquity, goats were seldom depicted being cooked, although Egyptians kept huge herds of these animals; see Darby, *Food*, I, 223. In the fourth century C.E. goat in Egypt were (like sheep) still farmed mostly for wool; see Bagnall, *Egypt*, 28.

[210] *Kanz*, 79, n. 199; for more details on the dish see below, p. 186.

[211] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 320, 355, 374, 377, 378. For more details regarding some of these dishes see below, pp. 185, 195. Meat of the suckling kid was sometimes recommended for health concerns; see, for example, Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 132; *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣināʾa 74, fol. 110a.

[212] All what the *ḥisba* manuals say about goat meat, however, is that the butchers should mark goat meat with saffron and avoid mixing it with other meats; see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 27, 34 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 52, 58); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 34–6; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 173; also Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 169.

[213] See above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 61–2.

[214] One of the rather few references to the consumption of buffalo meat can be found in Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 485, where the author reports that during the six months' siege led by the Khwarizmshāh Jalāl ad-Dīn in 626/1229–30, people of Khilāṭ first ate sheep, then cows, then buffalos, then horses, then donkeys, then mules, then dogs and, finally, cats. Another mention was recorded by al-Qalqashandī, according to whom buffalo meat (apart from geese and chicken) was the food of the people of the Chinese town al-Khansāʾ; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 479.

although generally distinguished from cow, was sometimes confused with it. This resulted, most probably, from the fact that the Arabic word for "cows," or *baqar*, designates also "bovines/cattle." It not impossible, then, that meat of buffalo, considered "a kind of cow,"[215] sold in markets as beef. The meat of the water-buffalo is fully comparable with beef[216] and often passed off as such in certain regions of the world. At the same time, however, it cannot be excluded that for most of the Middle Ages *jamūs* was bred in Egypt for its highly appreciated milk—"the most delicious of all kinds of milk, and the fattest"[217]—and not for its rather tough meat which required long cooking. In the eighth/fourteenth century one could still observe that "the herdsmen [called] each buffalo by its name, which it [knew] and [came] for milking when called by it."[218] In the eighth/fourteenth century, then, *jamūs* was clearly not bred for meat. The slaughtering of it might have been occasional: it is possible that only useless or old animals were butchered.

Actually, it seems that one of the first mentions of buffalo meat consumption in the Egyptian context dates back only to the early tenth/sixteenth century, when Leo Africanus noted down that "buffalo meat with a lot of vegetables" was a popular component of the local diet.[219] Buffalo meat was also mentioned by a number of later visitors to Egypt. Christophe Harant observed that Cairene cooks, apart from lamb and camel meat, also sold buffalo meat.[220] Antonius Gonzales, noted down that poor people ate buffalo meat, and sometimes camel meat.[221]

Unlike *jamūs*, the regular cow was domesticated in late Pre-Dynastic times and by the Middle Ages it already had a long record in the history of Egyptian fauna and, consequently, of Egyptian food culture as well. The

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[215] Cf., for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, where buffalo is defined as "a kind of cow;" or the eleventh/seventeenth-century author ash-Shirbīnī, who also says that "buffalo is a kind of cow" and explains that the term "cow" [*baqar*] refers to both buffalo and cow; see ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 356–7. Cf. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa who observed, when writing about people of al-Banghāl, that "their cattle are buffalos" (*wa-baqaruhum al-jawāmīs*); Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, IV, 101.

[216] See Davidson, *Oxford Companion to Food*, entry "Water-buffalo."

[217] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, X, 125. For more details on buffalo's milk and cheese made of it see below, chapter II.5. "Dairy products," pp. 235, 237, 241.

[218] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, X, 125.

[219] L'Africain, *Description*, 504, 517. Interestingly, Ibn Iyās, whose lifetime coincided with that of Leo Africanus and who frequently recorded the changing prices of various food items in Cairo, never mentioned the price of buffalo meat in his chronicle (although he recorded prices of mutton and beef).

[220] Harant, *Voyage*, 198.

[221] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6; see also Pococke, *Description*, 182.

long-horned variety, which prevailed in more ancient times, disappeared under the New Kingdom. Possibly the short-horned cattle which replaced it[222] was the same breed of cow which prevailed among the cattle farmed in Egypt in the Middle Ages.[223] The meat of these animals was, according to the dietary lore, unpleasant to eat, difficult to digest, and obstructive for the stomach. It could be relatively harmless only when prepared of a "very young animal, and cooked in vinegar, rue, mint, celery, leaves of *Citron medica* (*utrujj*), coriander, saffron and some sugar."[224] Indigestible as it was thought to have been, beef was not as despised as camel meat, nor as expensive as mutton; neither was it as bad as goat meat (moreover, it tasted quite good to a foreigner).[225] As such, it sold well throughout the Middle Ages.[226] However, although occasionally served on festive tables of the Mamluk elite,[227] beef does not seem to have been too popular among the elites.

The top of the Cairene meat hierarchy was invariably occupied by mutton. Interestingly, the taste of mutton was almost unknown in ancient Egypt where sheep, due to religious veneration, were rarely killed. This sheep-revering attitude seems to have been still alive in the Graeco-Roman period.[228] The change from proscribing mutton to recognizing it as the most coveted and fashionable food item must have taken place either in the Byzantine period or, which is more likely, some time after the Arab conquest. The Abbasid era seems the most probable dating, as it coincided with the time when both the Arabic-Islamic medicine and Arabic-Islamic cuisine spread throughout the Islamic domains to promote the consumption of

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[222] Darby, *Food*, I, 230.

[223] Probably the only medieval breed the name of which was recorded in the sources were the *Khaysī* cows; these, however, were farmed for their delicious milk, and not for meat. See below, chapter II.5. "Dairy products," pp. 235–6.

[224] Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 528. Cf. also *EI2,* X, "Ṭabkh" by D. Waines. Interestingly, in the eighteenth century it was still believed that beef, very much like the meat of the buffalo, was not easy for digestion: "None but the common people eat beef, and the flesh of the Buffalo, as they have a notion 'tis not easy for digestion;" Pococke, *Description*, 182.

[225] Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91.

[226] And was popular enough to make the chroniclers such as al-Maqrīzī or Ibn Iyās register its price changing on various occasions. Cf. "Beef Prices" in Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, app. IX, 116–117. For the records confirming the popularity of beef (also in the form of *harīsa* porridge) among the common Cairenes/Fusṭāṭis of the Middle Ages see, for example, by al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr,* 46.

[227] See, for example, al-Maqrīzī's accounts of the Mamluk wedding parties held in 727/1326–7 and 732/1331–2 (*Sulūk*, II/2, 288 and 346).

[228] Darby, *Food*, I, 212–21; Bagnall suggests that in the fourth century C.E. sheep were still raised mostly for their wool, although meat of these animals could have occasionally supplemented diet of the villagers; Bagnall, *Egypt*, 29, 143.

mutton. The dieticians left no room for doubts: mutton was healthy and easiest for digestion, while other kinds of meat were detrimental, particularly if consumed by the sick.[229] Whether for such recommendations or for its particular taste qualities, the fact is that mutton became at some point recognized as the best of meats in the Arabic-Islamic (as well as Jewish)[230] medieval food culture. As such, it also became expensive, fashionable, and coveted. The demand grew with time, so much so that the domestic production became insufficient. Herds had to be imported from Cyrenaica to meet the needs of the Egyptian market.[231] The prevailing medieval breed, renowned for its long and broad tail and long ears, was described by a number of European travelers who visited Egypt in the late ninth/fifteenth century and who appreciated delicious taste of the local mutton.[232]

Mutton invariably ruled on the festive tables of the elites.[233] Yet, it was by no means as chic as today's oysters, as rare as truffles, or as snobbish as the Beluga caviar. Prized as the King of Foods[234] and appreciated by the elites, it was not necessarily synonymous with luxury and wealth. One could simply buy it in the street, fresh, roasted, or cooked, in the form of

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[229] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 521–9; also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 173 and Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 44. Interestingly, in medieval Europe, where the same medical doctrine prevailed, lamb was widely regarded as dangerously warm and moist and, as such, never enjoyed popularity. See Turner, *Spice*, 122.

[230] See Goitein, *Daily Life*, 249.

[231] See Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 90–9. Ibn Riḍwān maintains that most of the imported Cyrenaican rams got sick after entering Egypt. The record refers to the Fatimid epoch, but the practice of seasonal import of sheep from Barqa region was still followed in the twentieth century.

[232] See, for example, von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 110–11 and n. 1; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 169; Trevisan, *Voyage*, 210; Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 161–2; Wild, *Voyages*, 183. Cf. also Ashtor, "Diet," 130.

[233] For the account of the food prepared for the harem of Khumārawayh, son of Ibn Ṭūlūn, see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 57–8; for records referring to the Fatimid food banquets see: Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 65–7; Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 190, 214. Actually, the evidence documenting the food banquets held by the Ayyubids is exceptionally modest. This does not mean, however, that the rulers of this dynasty refrained from celebrating festive occasions: when in 637/1239 a giant party was held to celebrate sultan al-ʿĀdil's II return to Cairo, 2.500 sheep were slaughtered to satisfy the appetites of the banqueters; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/2, 290. For the references to Mamluk food banquets see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 3. "Chronicles and annalistic sources," p. 45, n. 82.

[234] See above, the discussion on al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*) in "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57, 59, 61–2; and ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 352, where it is said that "mutton is the lordiest food of the people of this world and of Paradise." The phrase is apparently a paraphrase of the Prophet's "the lordiest food of the people of this world and of Paradise is meat."

joints or of ready to eat one-pot cookery dishes.[235] Moreover, there were times when mutton was a part of soldiers' pay, and when "a middle-class person with a monthly income of 300 dirhams (calculated on the basis of 10 dirhams per day) ... could buy, for example, with these 10 [silver] dirhams, 3 *raṭls* of mutton for 2 [silver] dirhams, the necessary seasonings for 2 [silver] dirhams, and for 4 [silver] dirhams he [could] purchase food for his children, family, and servants, if any."[236] But, doubtlessly, mutton was not every Cairene's daily fare.

The Arabic-Islamic recipes of the Near East generally did not specify what type of meat should be used in a given preparation. Apparently, this was not necessary as mutton must have been implicit in most of the meat dishes.[237] The author of *The Description of the Familiar Foods* (*Waṣf*), for example, provided this kind of information on two instances only. One is the recipe for *maṣūṣiyya*, where it is indicated that the dish "is made from meat of the suckling kid and some people make it with mutton."[238] The other is the recipe for a dish called *tannūriyya*, in which lamb or veal are recommended.[239] At the same time, only five recipes of the entire collection included in *Kanz* specify the required kind of meat. These are the recipe for a porridge called *harīsa*, for the preparation of which beef is recommended; the recipe for *qamḥiyya* dish, in which beef is mentioned as an option for mutton;[240] the recipe for *mawziyya,* or "banana dish," which

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[235] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 27–8, 30, 32, 34 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 52, 54, 56, 58); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 34–6; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 158–9, 172–3; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 110–11; Trevisan, *Voyage*, 210; Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 161–2 (ref. to Alexandria); Wild, *Voyages*, 183; Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91; Harant, *Voyage*, 198; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6; Brown, *Voyage*, 181.

[236] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamlūk Economics*, 84–5; for reference to mutton as a part of Mamluk soldiers' food ration see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 1149.

[237] Cf. Rodinson, "Studies," 149; Waines, "Ṭabkh," X.

[238] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 320; recipe for *maṣūṣ* in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 72, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 77; recipe for *maṣūṣiyya*, in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 49 and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 41 (where, however, the detail concerning mutton is not provided). The recipe for *maṣūṣ* as included in *Wuṣla*, 598, instructs that "the dish is made the same way it is made with chicken;" by the way, the chapter "On [chicken] *maṣūṣ*," *Wuṣla*, 527–42, includes as much as forty three recipes for diverse preparations which, apart from chicken meat, do not have much in common. The explanation of *maṣūṣ* as quoted from Lane's *Lexicon* in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 49, n. 1, does not explain what the nature of the *maṣūṣ* preparations really was.

[239] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 73.

[240] For recipes for *harīsa* porridge see *Kanz*, 274, n. 31; for a dish called *qamḥiyya* see *Kanz*, 45, n. 100; for more on both preparations see above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 167–8.

calls for meat of fat sheep;[241] and the recipe for *al-kharūf al-mamzūj*, or "mixed [here probably 'flavored'] lamb," which calls for a whole sheep.[242] The most interesting of this group is, however, a recipe for "[something] tasteful" (*malīḥa*) or a rather unusual preparation made of red (i.e. lean) goat meat which, precooked and seasoned with spices, was immersed in a mixture of broth beaten with raw eggs and cooked in the oven.[243]

The kind of meat was not the only detail which the majority of recipes ignored. What was not mentioned either were the preferred cuts of meat. Possibly, the cuts generally did not matter too much.[244] There were, however, exceptions, which included the recipe for filling of famous *bazmāward* "sandwiches," in which well-done roast meat from the ribs was recommended.[245] Furthermore, there were recipes which called for sheep's heads or trotters, and those in which livers or intestines were required.[246] Such recipes were, however, very few: it seems that heads, giblets/offal, etc. were not particularly favored among the urban elites.[247] If anybody fancied this kind of food, though, there were specialized cooks in the Cairene markets who offered cooked sheep's heads or livers roasted with

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[241] *Kanz*, 24, n. 34.

[242] Ibid., 53, n. 126.

[243] Ibid., 79, n. 199. The suggestions regarding the kind of meat could sometimes be found in the introductory remarks included in the cookery books by their compilers. But the clues were rather fragmentary—all that such instructions explained regarding the choice of meat was that "beef was suitable only for *sikbāj* dish, meat of burly calves was appropriate for *harīsa*, while fat mutton was good for dishes such as *harīsa*, *aruzziyya*, *farīkiyya*, *ʿiṭriyya* and for what resembled them;" see ibid., 6–7.

[244] Although from dietary point of view the cuts apparently mattered; see, for example, remarks by al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 538–51; also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 24–5 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 106–7).

[245] For the recipe for *bazmāward* calling for "well-done roast meat . . . from the ribs and other parts" see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 381.

[246] See, for example, the recipe for *ibrinj mājānī*, a complicated preparation made of sheep's heads and trotters, rice cooked as for pilaf, chickpeas, and scented with Chinese cinnamon and mastic; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 373; recipes for trotters in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 370, 371; recipe for "mock marrow" (*mukhkh maṣnūʿ*), for the preparation of which liver was required; *Wuṣla*, 559 (Engl. trans. in Rodinson, "Studies," 163); recipe for *ʿujja bi-l-kubūd* (omelette with livers) where chicken livers and gizzards were called for; *Kanz*, 80, n. 200; recipe for a dish called *maṣūṣ* that, apart from meat of suckling kid, called for lamb's head, trotters and guts; and recipe for a dish called *mufarraka*, for the preparation of which chicken livers and giblets were needed; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 378–9.

[247] See, for example, ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 38 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 62), where the remark referring to the street sausage makers clearly suggests that "the meat of cooked heads, liver . . . , kidneys and hearts," was considered of the lowest grade. Also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 158; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 185. Cf. Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 214.

spices in the *tannūr* oven.[248] Guts were used, above all, for making sausages of the *sukhtūr* kind, stuffed with meat, rice, chickpeas and seasoned with Chinese cinnamon, mastic, and other spices, or of the *naqāniq* type, made by the street cooks out of meat, onions, spices, and seasonings.[249] It seems there was no preparation comparable to contemporary European style tripe dish, although one late-Mamluk source mentions a dish called *jaghal maghal*, which the editor of the source identifies as "tripe."[250]

Bones were not appreciated, either. Butchers and street cooks of Cairo, like those of Alexandria, sold boneless meat. The practice must have been unknown in Europe of that time where, apparently, people were obliged to buy whole joints. Simone Sigoli, who visited Egypt in the eighth/fourteenth century, did not try to hide his appreciation: "and when you go to the butcher's," he wrote down in his travel account, "he will give you boneless meat, for such is the custom, and even if you buy it cooked from the cook, he too will give it to you boneless; if you however wish the bone, you may have it."[251] Indeed, very few recipes of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine call for undeboned meat. But bones were not really needed—in the majority of the preparations meat was cut up small or pounded in a stone mortar. True, the tasty bone marrow was sometimes difficult to resist; since, however, sucking a bone at the table was not a proper thing to do,[252] bones never became a sought after delicacy in the Arabic-Islamic culture comparable, for example, to Italian *osso bucco*. If anybody loved the taste of marrow, or enjoyed sucking bones, it was clearly considered more civilized to use fake ones, prepared of liver and sheep's tail fat stuffed into copper tubes.[253]

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[248] See also section on *kubūdiyyūn*, or dealers of roasted livers, in Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 159 and sections on *rawwāsūn*, or sellers of cooked/roasted sheep's heads and trotters, in ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 32 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 56), Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 172; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 43. Cf. a record referring to the use of animal heads and guts as quoted in ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, *Al-Maṭbakh as-Sulṭānī*, 90.

[249] For the recipe for *sukhtūr* see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368–70; for description of *naqāniq* see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 38 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 62); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 158.

[250] Geries, *Literary and Gastronomical Conceit*, 103, n. 68.

[251] Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162; also Trevisan, *Voyage*, 210.

[252] Sucking a bone at the table was clearly not a proper thing to do, not for a gentleman, at least; see Abū Ṭayyib al-Washshā, *Al-Muwashshā aw aẓ-Ẓarf wa-ẓ-Ẓurafāʾ* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1965), 191; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 332 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 503).

[253] The resulting dish, called "mock marrow," was "similar to marrow in appearance as well as in flavor;" see *Wuṣla*, 559 (in Rodinson, "Studies," 162–3, Arabic "*mukhkh*" is translated as "brain"). Interestingly, bones seem to have been despised even in the days of famine, such as that which hit Egypt in 415/1024, when the starving Fusṭāṭis, unable

Even if the cuts did not really matter, not everything was left to the cook's discretion as far as the proper choice of meat was concerned. First, whatever kind of meat was finally used, it was generally "desirable that meat be from young animals which graze on suitable grasses and are healthy in body."[254] What the cook should also consider was the distinction between lean and fat meat. Judging from the recipes this difference mattered, for there were dishes which required fat meat and there were those for which lean cuts were needed. From the dieticians' point of view, "the less fatty was the meat, the better," as lean meat "was less viscid, faster to digest, and better for the stomach."[255] Nothing indicates, however, that this was a commonly followed recommendation: the recipes called for fat meat not less often than for lean one. Besides, even if a given preparation was made of lean meat (*aḥmar*; *hazīl*), in the end it was not necessarily a low-fat food: in a considerable number of meat dishes, the melted fat of the sheep's tail was used as an ingredient.

Before the meat was cooked, it had to be cleaned. In theory, first it was to be washed "in hot/warm water and salt and then cleaned of ganglions, veins, and membranes."[256] However, simple washing of meat did not make it absolutely clean. The remaining dirt, gathered in the form of "froth, scum, grease, and whatever might float upon it during boiling,"[257] was removed when meat was already in the pot. Dirt and veins were not the only unwanted elements the meat could contain. Sometimes, one also had to get rid of bad smell, a problem which was particularly troublesome in places like Cairo, with its hot climate and well-supplied meat market. How to keep meat fresh, and what to do at the end of the day with the unsold part of the merchandise were the questions which the city butchers and food dealers must have faced every day.[258] Naturally enough, some

to afford exceedingly costly food, fed on greengrocers' garbage. Considering the dreadful death toll and disastrous circumstances, an outsider would not probably wonder at the sight of hungry people catching and sucking bones which butchers threw for dogs. Yet, when one Fusṭāṭi did so in despair, the chronicler considered it odd enough to be worth recording; al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 72–3.

[254] Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 137.

[255] Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 538–9.

[256] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303; *Kanz*, 5–6; al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 39, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 29. Cf. al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 8 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 79–80).

[257] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303; *Kanz*, 5.

[258] According to an anonymous author, in order to preserve the surplus of meat instead of waiting till it goes bad, one simply had to "take meat and fix it on spike, and hang it in the well so that it be very close to the surface of water." Another way was more complicated: one had to take legs (for example of a mutton), clean them of fat and bones, cut

of them cheated the customers in order to get rid of bad or old meat. If, however, a customer proved naïve enough to be fooled in the butcher's shop, he/she still could resort to means which would save the not-so-fresh meat. Contrary to what might be expected, this was not done by the excessive use of spices.[259] In order to get rid of bad smell, the Cairene chef would rather cook meat with hazelnuts, or "empty an egg into the pot,"[260] or use fenugreek (*ḥulba*), one of the most basic ingredients in all Indian curry mixes, but relatively rare in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine. There were also other ways. As an anonymous author advised his reader: "if you want to improve meat which smells bad, pound some fenugreek, moisten meat with it and wrap it in a piece of woolen fabric; then take a pot, fill it with water and boil it well. Then put the wrapped meat into the pot and let it boil in the water for a while."[261] Any culinary preparation could be made of meat "refreshed" this way. In fact, the woolen wrapper was not absolutely necessary and it seems that to improve the bad-smelling meat one could simply boil it with fenugreek and then change the water. The effect was so good that after the operation "no one could recognize whether it was fresh or putrid."[262]

In the Arabic-Islamic medieval urban cuisine, meat could be prepared by frying, roasting, baking, or cooking in the oven. Jerked meat, almost absent from the cookery books, clearly was not the food of the city people.[263] In fact, the cookery books do not mention plain roasted or fried meat too often either, but, as a contemporary scholar indicated, such dishes must have been more widespread than recipes suggest.[264] The most popular method of cooking meat seems to have been "the 'stew' or 'casserole' preparation where the ingredients were cooked in liquid in a pot over

into slices, salt them well, and leave them overnight. In the morning the slices were to be washed with water, dried, coated with fat and put in a dry place. Preserved his way, meat was supposed to keep fresh for long. For the ways to keep meat fresh see *Kanz*, 9.

[259] For a more detailed discussion on this aspect of the Arabic-Islamic food culture see below, chapter II.9.E. "Spices, herbs, fragrances," pp. 327–8.

[260] *Kanz*, 9.

[261] Ibid., 10.

[262] Ibid., 9.

[263] As far as the discussed cookbooks are concerned, the only recipe for dried meat is included in *Wuṣla*, 719. The recipe, titled "*taqdīd laḥm ʿamal ar-Rūm*," or "drying meat in Greek/Byzantine style" is in fact quite similar to the Byzantine recipe for dried meat (*apikti*) as quoted in Dalby, *Flavours*, 175.

[264] Perry, "Familiar Foods," 281; indeed, *ḥisba* manuals often mention meat roasted and sold by the street food dealers.

the heat of a fire."[265] Indeed, the recipes for stews definitely prevailed in the cookery books. This could have been caused by a number of reasons. First, the local climate did not allow one to tenderize the carcasses by hanging them for a few days, as done in colder countries. Some cookbooks instructed the cooks to "let meats age overnight to ripen,"[266] yet one night might not have been enough to make meat sufficiently tender. Actually, mincing meat into a fine paste (in order to cook it, for instance, rolled into balls) solved the problem of making fresh and tough meat softer and more palatable. An easier and more popular way was to subject meat to slow and steady simmering, or stewing.[267] Stewing had other practical advantages, too. Unlike in the case of grilled or roasted meat, in stews meat could be combined in one dish with vegetables, legumes, and rice. This significantly reduced the problems related to the wastage of fuel, always extremely scarce in Cairo, and to the necessity of washing additional pots in costly water transported from the Nile River.[268]

In the Arabic-Islamic cookery books, the stews were sometimes divided into the so-called *ḥawāmiḍ*, or sour meat stews, and *sawādhij*, "plain" or non-sour stewed dishes.[269] The souring ingredients were the most obvious, though not the only element distinguishing the sour stews from "plain" ones. In sour preparations, meat (fat or unspecified) was cut up into medium or small pieces, thrown into a pot,[270] and covered with water. Then salt was usually added and everything was brought to boil. After the scum was removed, vegetables (mostly eggplant, carrots, colocasia, or

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[265] *EI2,* X, "Ṭabkh" by D. Waines. In fact, casseroles, as dishes cooked in an oven, were in fact much less popular than stews, or dishes cooked over a fire, with heat applied to the bottom of the cooking vessel.

[266] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 305; *Kanz*, 6.

[267] Cf. Collingham, *Curry*, 163. On the techniques of preparing meat in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 65–73.

[268] Cf. Davidson, *Oxford Companion to Food*, entry "Stew."

[269] The distinction between *ḥawāmiḍ* and *sawādhij* dishes was followed, for example, in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*; also *Waṣf*; other books do not stress the distinction between the sour and plain preparations: in *Kanz*, for example, it was only mentioned in the introduction to chapter V of the book, as well as in the introductory remarks. Cf. also Perry, "Familiar Foods," 280.

[270] Most often, the pot was of the *qidr*-type, made of soapstone or pottery, or of the *dast*-type, "a flat-bottomed utensil with inward-sloping sides several inches high" (Perry, "Familiar Foods," 286), made of tinned copper and, sometimes, apparently also of soapstone and pottery. For source information regarding the material of which the pots were made see, for example, al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 10–12 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 81–2); al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 38, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 28; *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣināʿa 74, fols. 109a–b; *Kanz*, 5, and 139 n. 374; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 1b; also Perry, "Familiar Foods," 285–6; and Ahsan, *Social Life*, 120–1.

chickpeas) and spices were added—sometimes only a part of what the recipe called for, at other times all of it. Although it was suggested that the cook be moderate with spices in the case of sour dishes as these had "their own broth,"[271] the recommended seasoning composition was, nevertheless, quite fragrant. Mint was almost *de rigeur* in it, while Chinese cinnamon, coriander, pepper, ginger, mastic, and saffron were also common. Of alliums onions prevailed, while garlic and leeks were used from time to time. At this stage, meatballs of pounded meat (*kubab*), sesame oil or, less frequently, sheep's tail fat, could also be thrown in. Then the preparation was left to "boil until it stewed."

When the dish was nearly done, it could be thickened with rice or starch[272] and improved with additional ingredients, such as remaining spices or vegetables (if there were any left), sweetening agents (sugar or syrup), almonds or nuts. What was particularly important, the souring agents, such as pomegranate seeds, lemon juice, sour fruits, sumac, vinegar, or verjuice were then added to the pot. Quite often, the ready dish was sprinkled with rose-water. The interesting feature regarding the *ḥawāmiḍ* recipes was that their authors often recommended wiping the sides of the pot, which suggests that the finished dishes were served in the cooking pots.

The most typical for the *ḥawāmiḍ* or sour category were probably dishes such as *sikbāj* (a sweet-sour dish made of fat meat, onions, leeks, carrots, eggplant, almonds, jujubes, dried figs, and raisins; seasoned with Chinese cinnamon, dry coriander, and other spices, it was thickened with starch or rice, and sprinkled with rose-water);[273] *zīrbāj* (a sweet-sour dish made of fat meat and/or chicken, chickpeas and almonds, seasoned with Chinese cinnamon, coriander, pepper, mastic, and saffron, and scented with rose-water);[274] *ṭabāhaja* (strips of meat fried in oil with onion, celery, colocasia, and bunches of fresh mint, seasoned with saffron, dry coriander,

[271] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 39, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 29; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303.

[272] Adding a starchy ingredient was not, however, common in the case of sour dishes.

[273] For recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 40, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 30; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 305, 371; *Kanz*, 14, n. 7; 42, n. 90; 56, n. 136; *Wuṣla*, 598–9; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 5a. In al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104, and al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210, *sikbāj* is mentioned as one of the dishes served for the Mamluk sultan.

[274] For recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 43, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 33; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 309, 325; *Kanz*, 17, n. 14; 30, n. 52; 34, n. 63; 36, n. 70; 38, n. 75; 88, n. 226.

cumin, caraway, Chinese cinnamon, ginger, and *murrī* sauce);[275] *maḍīra* (a dish made of fat meat, onions, leeks, and yoghurt, improved with melted sheep's tail fat and seasoned with Chinese cinnamon and coriander; sometimes also cumin, mastic, salted lemon and fresh mint could be added), as well as various fruity meat preparations: *nāranjiyya* "bitter orange dish", *rummāniyya* "pomegranate dish", *ḥummāḍiyya* "citron dish", *tuffāḥiyya* "apple dish", *mishmishiyya* "apricot dish" etc.[276]

As for *sawādhij*, or "plain," non-sour stews, some of them were cooked in a manner similar to sour stews. Meat (either fat or unspecified) was first cut up, then thrown into the pot, covered with water, and so forth. Most of *sawādhij*, however, differed from *ḥawāmiḍ* as far as both ingredients and modes of preparation were concerned. As for ingredients, souring agents, not surprisingly, disappeared from non-sour stews. But so did mint, rosewater, saffron, ginger, and fruits. Sweetening agents and nuts were added only occasionally, if at all, and onion was used much less frequently than in *ḥawāmiḍ*. Instead, rice appeared in many *sawādhij* preparations, most of which called for the sheep's tail fat, too. Legumes, particularly chickpeas, became the dominant vegetables while Chinese cinnamon and coriander remained the most important spices; mastic and, though to a lesser degree, cumin, were also quite often used. Differences in composition accompanied changes in the cooking technique: unlike in sour stews, meat in non-sour dishes was often stewed or stir-fried with spices first, either in tail fat or in sesame oil, and only then covered with water. After the scum and froth had been removed from the surface of boiling broth, chickpeas or/and washed rice were added to it. Like in the case of sour stews, the preparation was then left on a gentle fire to settle.[277]

In some dishes, such as the renowned *aruzz mufalfal*,[278] rice was cooked separately with melted sheep's tail fat and spices, either in milk or in water and, when nearly done, pieces of stewed meat were arranged on the top of it. Then the pot was covered and the preparation left until settled. In other dishes meat, with part of the spices and vegetables, was stewed until the water evaporated. Then the remaining part of the spices and vegetables was thrown into the pot, and everything was covered with

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[275] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 310, 328; *Kanz*, 40, n. 83.

[276] For more on "fruity" meat dishes see below, chapter II.7. "Fruits," pp. 280–2.

[277] In a recipe for *isfānākhiyya*, a pot is sealed with the dough; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 345.

[278] For recipes see, for example, ibid., 332; *Kanz*, 274, n. 33.

water. This was, for example, the case of *mutawakkiliyya*, a dish known for having been prohibited, in the late fourth/tenth century, by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim.[279] As far as the manner of serving *sawādhij* is concerned, there was no uniform rule. Judging upon the recipes which recommended wiping the sides of the cooking pot, in some cases the preparations were served straight from the pot. Some dishes, however, were supposed to be ladled to serving bowls.

In contemporary lore of the kitchen, the meaning of fried food is relatively obvious. It is understood as food prepared either by sautéing, that is cooking in heated fat in a wide, shallow frying pan, or by deep-frying, that is immersing foods in a large, deep pan of boiling fat.[280] The precooking of food which is to be fried is practiced only occasionally and in general does not concern meat but croquets, pancakes, and the like. This seemingly universal definition is not, however, valid for the art of frying as practiced in the medieval Arabic-Islamic cuisine, if only because its cooks rarely fried non-precooked meat. But there were other peculiarities, too.

A medieval Cairene, like majority of the Arabic-Islamic urban consumers, was offered two basic kinds of fried preparations: *qalāya* and *muṭajjanāt*. The two terms reflected, in theory at least, not only the two different cooking methods, but also two different kinds of vessels used in the process of cooking. Logically enough, one tends to understand that the *qalāya* dishes were fried in a pan called *miqlā*, made of copper, pottery, iron, or soapstone,[281] while the *muṭajjanāt* were cooked in a somewhat larger vessel called *ṭājin*, which was made of tinned copper, soapstone

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[279] For a discussion on al-Ḥākim's alimentary prohibitions see De Smet, "Interdictions," 56; and below, part III, chapter V.3. "*Fuqqāʾ* and *aqsimā*," pp. 473–4. For the recipes for *mutawakkiliyya* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 340, 349; *Kanz*, 42, n. 89; 267, n. 10.

[280] In the case of deep-frying method, very hot fat is used for foodstuffs which must be sealed instantly, such as anything dipped in eggs or batter.

[281] For references to the material of which the *miqlā* pans were made see, for example, *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʿat Taimūr 11, fol. 104: *miqlā laṭīf min an-nuḥās* ("nice copper pan"); ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 25: *miqlā az-zulābiyya min an-nuḥās al-aḥmar al-jayyid* ("frying pan for *zulābiyya* made of fine red copper"); *Kanz*, p 141, n. 377: *miqlā fakhkhār* ("pottery pan"); *Wuṣla*, 109b: *miqlā ḥadīd li-s-samak* ("iron pan for fish"); *miqlā birām li-l-narjasiyyāt wa-l-ʿujaj* (soapstone pan for *narjasiyya* dishes and omelettes); cf. al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 12 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 85). See also Perry, "Familiar Foods," 281; Ahsan, *Social Life*, 121. The pottery pans were, most probably, flat vessels with two small handles (of the same material) on two opposite sides of the vessel. This kind of pans (multiple fragments of such medieval vessels were found in Alexandrian Kom el-Dikka) is still used in rural Egypt.

or red pottery.[282] However, the rationale of Arabic morphology tends to be misleading in the case of frying vessels—enough to mention a recipe for *bayḍ muṭajjan* (sautéed eggs) in which the cook is advised to use the *miqlā*, and not the *ṭājin*-type of pan.[283] Or vice versa: in a recipe for *bayḍ maqlī* eggs are to be fried not in the *miqlā*, but in the *ṭājin*-type of pan.[284] Moreover, in his instructions for chefs, one of the authors of *Wuṣla* recommended that for making fried *qalāya* dishes small pots should be used;[285] *miqlā* pans were in this case not named at all. And, indeed, in most of the recipes for dishes categorized as *qalāya*, a *qidr*-cooking pot, and not a *miqlā*-pan, is mentioned.[286] Apparently, the pan, very useful for frying eggs or fish, was probably of little use for preparing dishes which, although known as "fried," were in fact cooked according to rules comparable to those applied in stewed preparations.

In most cases, in the *qalāya* dishes both lean and fat meat was used. First, fat (or unspecified) meat, either pounded or cut up into small pieces, was boiled in water. After the scum was removed, meatballs made of spiced lean meat and spices were thrown in. Sometimes some vegetables, mostly chickpeas and spinach, were also added. Spices were to be used generously in this kind of dishes[287]—the composition usually included Chinese cinnamon, coriander, saffron, onions, spice mix,[288] occasionally also ginger, pepper, and mastic. Sometimes, a souring ingredient was also put in. When the water evaporated (or was removed) the fat of the sheep's tail was added and only then the preparation was fried. *Qalāya*, or "fried dishes," could also be cooked in a reverse order: small cuts of meat were first stir-fried in fat until lightly brown and only then covered with water and brought to boil, together with meatballs and spices which at this

[282] For references to *ṭājin* see, for example, *Kanz*, 219, n. 611, 223, n. 626, where *ṭājin birām* (soapstone *ṭājin*) is mentioned; ash-Shirbīnī, however, defines *ṭājin* as "a round and wide pottery vessel for cooking fish, rice, meat, poultry, etc.;" ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 333. See also Perry, "Familiar Foods," 281.

[283] See, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 383; *Kanz*, 78, n. 196. Also a recipe for *bayḍ maṣūṣ* (*Kanz*, 79, n. 197) in which eggs "*tuṭajjan*," or "are fried" in *miqlā*-pan.

[284] See, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 384. *Ṭājin* vessel is also recommended for deep-frying of *sanbūsik* pies (for example *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 382) and for preparing dishes of scrambled eggs (*Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 384–6).

[285] "*Al-qudūr aṣ-ṣughār li-l-qalāya*," *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣinā'a 74, fol. 109b.

[286] See *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 343–7.

[287] See cooking suggestions for cooks in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 39, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 29; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303.

[288] For discussion on various spice mixes as used in the Arabic-Islamic cookery see below, chapter II.9.E. "Spices, herbs, fragrances," pp. 332–40.

instance usually were also thrown in. The *qalāya* were either served in a cooking vessel, i.e. in a pan or pot the sides of which were wiped with cloth, or were ladled out into the bowls.

According to an old Baghdadi rule, the technological difference between *qalāya* and *muṭajjanāt* was clear: in *muṭajjanāt* meat was boiled before frying, while in *qalāya* it was not.[289] Interestingly, in the medieval Cairene cuisine this rule often worked the other way round: judging by the recipes, many of the dishes prepared of the pre-boiled meat were in fact categorized as *qalāya*, and not as *muṭajjanāt*. This was not always so, however, and most of the remaining *muṭajjanāt* preparations, non-uniform as they were, matched the Baghdadi definition. A group of these dishes involved recipes which recommended meat of suckling kid. This was to be cut up into joints, then boiled lightly in vinegar, taken out, dried, and fried in sesame oil. The ready preparation was flavored with spices: Chinese cinnamon, coriander, pepper, mastic, caraway and mint were most frequently added. Vinegar, if not used for parboiling, was added to sesame oil in which the meat was fried.[290]

Another group of dishes typical for the *muṭajjanāt* included various stuffings, meat spreads, and meatballs, the cooking of which generally agreed with the Baghdadi definition of the category. For example, the making of stuffing for eggplants involved boiling pounded meat (preferably lean) in sumac water, then taking it up from the pot, drying, and sprinkling with seasonings which, in this case, included dry mint, dry coriander, pepper, caraway, mastic and Chinese cinnamon. The ready paste was stuffed into eggplants which were subsequently fried in sesame oil.[291] A similar procedure was applied in the case of the so-called *sanbūsiks*, or samosas made of flatbread cut into triangles which, stuffed with meat paste, were sealed with dough and deep-fried in sesame oil.[292] The making of meatballs

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[289] Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 68, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 70; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 358; Perry, "Familiar Foods," 281.

[290] The *muṭajjanāt* category included also dishes such as *maṣūṣ*, the recipe for which, apart from meat of suckling kid, called for lamb's head, trotters and guts; and a dish called *mufarraka*, for the preparation of which chicken livers and giblets were needed (*Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 378–9), as well as a dish made of chicken and sparrows (*Kanz*, 59 n. 143).

[291] See the recipe for *maqlūba* in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 378.

[292] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 379, 382, 386; *Kanz*, 49, n. 116; 3, n. 127. The *bazmāward* "sandwiches" were, in a way, comparable to *sanbūsiks*. However, they could not be classified in the *muṭajjanāt* category. *Bazmāward* was a loaf of flatbread stuffed with paste made of chopped and seasoned roasted meat which made

also involved the parboiling of meat paste and its subsequent frying. In this case, the paste—prepared by boiling pounded lean meat and mixing it with pounded pistachios, seasonings, and beaten eggs—was simply formed into meatballs and fried in sesame oil.[293] Although omelettes and scrambled eggs formed a category of their own, when prepared with meat they might, in theory at least, be also classified as *muṭajjanāt*. To make such an omelette, one needed lean, boiled or roast meat. This was torn into small pieces, mixed with eggs beaten with salt and spices, and then fried in sesame oil in the *ṭājin*-type of vessel.[294]

Stewing and frying were surely the most popular of the cooking techniques applied in making meat dishes. Also, they were relatively typical, particularly if compared to the rules governing the art of cooking meat porridges. The term "meat porridge," which is the most convenient translation of the term *harīsa*, brings to mind a relatively simple dish. But *harīsa*, like other dishes belonging to the category of oven dishes, or the so-called *tannūriyyat*, was not simple to cook. The dish was already discussed in the preceding section[295] so there is no need to repeat the details of its time-demanding and burdensome preparation. It may, however, be worth reminding that the most important aspect of cooking *harīsa* involved shredding boiled meat and boiling it again together with ground wheat. This, however, had to be done in a covered and sealed pot which, moreover, was to be left in the covered *tannūr* oven for the night. In the morning the pot was taken out and its contents was beaten into a smooth paste. Interestingly, the sources are somewhat inconsistent regarding the kind of meat of which *harīsa* was made. Some of them recommended beef, others suggested using either beef or mutton, still others instructed the cook to use both. Besides, chicken was also appreciated, either as

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it similar to *sanbūsik*. Unlike with the *sanbūsik*, the *bazmāward* loaf, cut into thin pieces, was ready to eat and did not require further frying; cf. above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 160–1.

[293] See, for example, a recipe for *makābīb al-Yahūd*, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 379. For other ways of making meatballs see recipes for *nāranjiyya*, *fākhitiyya*, *mudaqqaqāt ḥāmiḍa* (sour meatballs) or *mudaqqaqāt sādhija* (plain meatballs), in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 346–7, 353; *Kanz*, 21, n. 24; 23, n. 30.

[294] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 385–6; *Kanz*, 77, n. 189.

[295] See above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 165–6.

the main, or as a secondary meat ingredient.[296] Generally, however, the sources agree that meat for *harīsa* should have been fat.[297]

Whatever kind of meat was used for making the *harīsa* porridge, it was not the meat, but the technology of production which made the dish so unusual. Beating, or *hars*, was particular only for *harīsa*. The other peculiarity, which consisted in leaving the dish in the oven for the night, *harīsa* shared with most of the dishes categorized as *tannūriyyat*. Such an operation was applied in the case of, for example, sausages (*sukhtūr*),[298] trotters (*akāriʿ*),[299] lentils cooked with meat,[300] *sikbāj*,[301] or a dish called *tannūriyya*, which was made of pieces of fat boiled meat mixed with wheat, spices, salt, and water.[302] A special kind of oven dishes were *jawādhib*, or sweet puddings made of bread crumbs, bread, or semolina mixed with almonds, pistachios or poppy seeds, sometimes with milk or sesame oil. Non-meat dishes themselves, they were, however, often baked in the oven under roasting meat (or chicken) so that they could be soaked with the running fat and meat juices. The pudding itself could be served with or without the roasted meat.[303]

Summing up, the Cairene meat preparations were of a quite diverse nature. Mutton, beef, goat, camel, lamb or kid, and, for special customers,

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[296] Ash-Shayzarī points out that the properly made *harīsa* should include both lamb and beef, in proportion ca. 2 to 3; see *Nihāya*, 36 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 60); and Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 39. According to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 176, to make *harīsa* beef or mutton was needed. The recipes for *harīsa* as included in *Kanz*, 274, n. 31 and Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 11a, call for beef, while the appropriate recipes in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 72; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 370; and *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha* in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 475, do not specify the kind of meat at all. According to Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 65, the Fatimid caliphs distributed, on festive occasions, *harīsa* prepared in three versions: beside the cauldron with beef *harīsa*, there were also one with mutton and another with chicken *harīsa*. See also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 206.

[297] For example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 69, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 72; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 366; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 176; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 39; also ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 36: "*wa yakūnu laḥm al-harīsa samīnan fatiyyan*," although Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 60, translates it as "the meat used for *harīsa* should be lean and young."

[298] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368–70.

[299] Ibid., 370–371.

[300] Ibid., 371.

[301] See above, p. 191.

[302] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 368.

[303] *Jūdhāba* itself could be served with or without the meat/chicken. For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 411–13; *Kanz*, 55, n. 132. For the discussion of the dish see Perry, "What to Order in Ninth-Century Baghdad," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 219–21; see also below, pt. II, chapter III.1. "Public consumption," p. 357.

horse meat, could be jointed, cut up medium or small, pounded with a cleaver and in the mortar, cooked in water or vinegar, stewed, roasted, fried, simmered, or cooked in the oven. Meat could be also made into sausages (which were rumored to have been prohibited once by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim),[304] or stuffed into pies such as *sanbūsik* or *bazmāward*. Meat was always cooked with spices and herbs, sometimes with rice, vegetables and fruits of choice, often with legumes and nuts, sometimes with yoghurt. Sometimes it was made sour or sour-sweet, at other times spicy sweet, always with salt which, counteracted with sweetening agents, must have often produced sweet-and-salty flavor. Usually, but not always, meat dishes were served warm.

As for how it all tasted or smelled, the opinions were divided. Ibn al-Ḥājj, for example, observed that "meats in countries other than Egypt have no stench in them—in places like the Hijaz, Iraq, the Maghreb, or in other countries, they have a perfume-like smell. As for Egypt, one has to clean his hands from the stench of [local] meats."[305] Other authors, however, did not share Ibn al-Ḥājj's negative impression: Ibn Ẓahīra, a Syrian who stayed in Cairo in the ninth/fifteenth century, noticed that meats in Egypt, i.e. "camel, beef and sheep" were better than meats of Syria and the Hijaz."[306] Pero Tafur (the fifteenth century), too, observed that in Cairo "meats are all good,"[307] while Sigoli (the fourteenth century) declared that the Alexandrian mutton was "the finest meat in the world to eat."[308] At the end of the sixteenth century de Villamont noted, while in Cairo, that "all their meats are prepared in a different way than ours" and that "ours" "do not equal the local ones in delicacy."[309]

3. Fowls and Eggs

Medieval Cairenes of all social classes and ethnic origins loved bird meat. Birds were served on the caliphs' and sultans' tables, sold in the streets, and provided to soldiers as a part of their pay. Birds were usually served in considerable quantities on the royal menus. The Fatimid food banquet held to celebrate the breaking of the Ramadan fast was, for instance, an

[304] See Ibn ʿAbd aẓ-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍa*, 71.
[305] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 226.
[306] Ibn Ẓahīra, *Faḍūʾil*, 186.
[307] Tafur, *Travels*, 101.
[308] Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162.
[309] De Villamont, *Voyages*, 230–1.

occasion to present 21 trays on each of which 350 chickens, 350 pullets and 350 pigeons were piled up upon 21 roasted muttons.[310] Compared with this, 400 geese and 1,000 chickens slaughtered for the banquet held by sultan Barqūq in 800/1396–7 seems a manifestation of modesty.[311] But the share of poultry in the diet of the Mamluk elites was relatively high on a daily basis, too: in 1512 Domenico Trevisan, a Venetian ambassador to Cairo, noted that the sultan's court consumed 500 chickens a day.[312]

The quantities of what was offered to ordinary Cairenes in the city markets were also huge. Al-Maqrīzī had fond memories of times when, after the afternoon prayer, the fowl fryers used to sell their merchandise while sitting in a row which stretched all along the way from al-Kāmil's madrasa to the door of madrasa of an-Nāṣir.[313] Although the number of bird-meat fryers decreased in later years, by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century "great quantities of boiled and roasted fowls" still characterized the offer of street cooks of Cairo.[314] It seems that fowls prepared in the street could sometimes be much better than those cooked in the kitchens of the elites. It must have been for this reason that one of the high ranking Mamluk officials went down to Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square every night to buy huge quantities of fried (*muṭajjan*) chickens, sand grouses, small pigeons, and fried sparrows for the *wazīr* Fakhr ad-Dīn Mājid Ibn Khaṣīb.[315]

Fowls were consumed in Egypt since antiquity. In antiquity, however, most of the species used for culinary purposes were migratory birds. Captured while on their way between central or southern Africa and Europe, they formed seasonal items in the diet of the local population: cooked and pickled, salted, skewered and roasted. Contemporary scholars are still unable to assign scientific names to many of the ancient Egyptian species. Those which have been identified include drop, a quail-like species, ostrich, as well as goose, duck, and crane. Once captured in traps and nets, they were subsequently moved to cages and force fed.[316] Doves and pigeons were raised in cotes, the architecture of which did not differ much from the so-called pigeon towers of today (the best known examples are seen in the Fayyum oases). It seems they were the only domesticated

[310] Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 214.
[311] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 902; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 81; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501.
[312] Thenaud, *Voyage*, 211.
[313] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 29.
[314] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 109–10; Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91.
[315] For references see above, chapter I.5. "Customers," p. 126.
[316] Darby, *Food*, I, 272–3, 278.

local species, and, at the same time, the favorite table fowl of the local population.[317]

Most of these birds must have been still consumed in Egypt in the days of the Islamic conquest. Wild species, such as sparrows, partridges, quails, sand grouses, francolins, geese, ducks, and larks, were still caught by bird hunters,[318] while pigeons continued to be fattened in coops or towers.[319] But what satisfied the Egyptian villagers could not meet the demands of the busy urban markets. A big city needed a more predictable, more regular, and more stable supply. Luckily for Cairo, some time between the Arabs' arrival from the east and the Fatimids' arrival from the west, domesticated chicken appeared in Egypt, and soon became the city's most popularly consumed fowl.[320] Actually, it is rather difficult to indicate when exactly chickens started to be consumed widely in Egypt. Some consumption of chickens must have occurred before the Fatimids founded their Egyptian capital in the fourth/tenth century.[321] But it was probably the palaces and the streets of Fatimid Cairo that developed the taste for chicken meat in Egypt. In fact, this must have been a side-effect of the process of adjusting the Fatimid diet to the fashion imposed by the new Arabic-Islamic culinary culture. Indeed, the recipes of the new wave cuisine favored chickens

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[317] Darby, *Food*, I, 286. In antiquity, pigeons and doves were confused and misidentified, as both were used as food and raised in similar structures. The problem persisted in the Middle Ages—the term *ḥamām* as used in the Arab medieval sources designated both "pigeon" and "dove." For the sake of clarity of the presentation, the term "pigeon" is used in the present study.

[318] On medieval bird hunters, see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 29 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 53), Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 58. For the fowl varieties mentioned in medieval and early post-medieval sources see, for example: al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 572–4; Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 134, 137; Ludolph von Suchem, *Ludolph von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land and the Way Thither* (*Written in the Year A.D. 1350*) (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1895), 79 (on partridges brought from the countryside); Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162 (on supply of quails in Alexandria); cf. also Harant, *Voyage*, 278 ("il y a beaucoup . . . des oiseaux sauvages et domestiques"). Ostrich appears, above all, in the post-medieval Western accounts: Harant, *Voyage*, 164–68; Brown, *Voyage*, 111–12; Corneille le Brun, *Voyage au Levant* (Paris: Cavelier, 1714), 225. For study of birds of the seventeenth-century Egypt see Gonzales, *Voyage*, 597–639.

[319] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 573, uses the term *buyūt*, or "houses." On pigeon towers proper (*burūj al-ḥamām*), see ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quhūf*, 377–80.

[320] Actually, chickens seem to have been unknown in Egypt before the Ptolemaic Period. The appearance of domesticated chickens in Egypt might have taken place some time before the Arab conquest. It should be kept in mind, however, that the consumption of chickens in Egypt prior to the Late Byzantine Period (the sixth century) is not certain, either, and historical information concerning it remains ambiguous; see Darby, *Food*, I, 297, 305.

[321] Ibn al-Kindī (the fourth/tenth century), *Faḍāʾil*, 50, mentioned "*as-surmakiyya* chicken" being present in Egypt; however, he gave no further details regarding them.

over other fowls,[322] and the local market's demand for chickens seemed to have increased significantly over a relatively short period. Moreover, the traditional chicken hatching clearly proved inefficient.

We do not know who (and when) first had the idea of making a mass-scale business of artificial chicken production based on applying the ancient Egyptian pigeon-rising know-how to the concept of incubating hens' eggs.[323] The non-Western authors who visited Egypt between the fourth/tenth and sixth/twelfth centuries (there are almost no Western sources for this early period) are silent on chicken-producing hatcheries.[324] Al-Jāḥiẓ (the second-third/eighth-ninth centuries), who in his *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* ("Book of Animals") included a section titled "Tending of Chickens in Egypt," does not demonstrate any knowledge regarding the existence of chicken incubators in Egypt, either. Actually, all that he says is that "In Egypt, they are grazed the way the sheep are grazed; they have a herdsman [*rāʿin*] and a caretaker [*qayyim*]."[325] Moreover, the Geniza documents seem to be silent about these kinds of incubators, too. From Goitein's study one can learn that Egypt was renowned for its chickens, that the Fusṭāṭis, both Jews and non-Jews, appreciated chicken meat, and that at least part of the town's demand was satisfied by deliveries from the countryside. It is not clear, however, whether the fowls were naturally or artificially hatched.[326]

But even if the Geniza records do not mention chicken incubators—or ovens, as they were called by the Europeans—such structures must have already existed there by the time the Geniza records were being written. True, the earliest available record to confirm the existence of artificial hatching facilities in Egypt seems to date back to the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century. But when ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, the Iraqi author of the record, came to Egypt, the "chicken factories" (*maʿāmil*

[322] Save for a very few exceptions in which sparrows or pigeons are needed, all the recipes of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine call for chickens. Interestingly, both in Southeast Asia (which seems to have been the center of domestication of chicken) and in the eastern Mediterranean of antiquity, the main use of hens seems to have been sacrificial or divinatory rather than alimentary; see Darby, *Food*, I, 309.

[323] It should be kept in mind that the ancient Egyptian tower-like cotes for raising and housing pigeons and doves did not serve as incubators. The same is true of the Egyptian "pigeon towers" of today.

[324] That is travelers and geographers such as Ibn Ḥawqal, Nāṣer-e Khosraw, al-Iṣṭakhrī, al-Idrīsī, or Ibn Jubayr.

[325] Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd as-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1938), II, 333.

[326] See Goitein, *Daily Life*, 233, 250; idem, *Economic Foundations*, 124–5, 211; 429, n. 69.

al-furūj) were already a well-established branch of the local food industry. According to al-Baghdādī, the "chicken factories" worked all over the country and "nothing was more rare than to find in Egypt chickens hatched naturally by incubation of the hen; one frequently saw among the Egyptians people to whom this natural process was unknown."[327] Both the popularity of the method and the level of expertise with which the craft was practiced seem to indicate that by the end of the sixth/twelfth century the incubators had been working in Egypt for generations.

The oven-like structures were clearly an obligatory tourist attraction which made a hit with all the Western visitors[328] who must have been as surprised at the sight of curious chicken incubators as were the Egyptians abroad at the sight of chickens being hatched in a natural way. It was even reported that a certain Egyptian, having learned about the absence of chicken incubators in Syria, went to that country to establish one in the al-ʿUqayba area. The plan was carried out and in the summer chickens hatched in the facilities; as soon as the autumn came, however, the technology clearly failed, for no new nestling appeared. The entrepreneur had to give up the unprofitable business and went back to Egypt.[329]

Judging upon the enormous quantities of eggs incubated in the installations,[330] the Cairene market's demand for chicken must have been very high, probably much higher than that in any other urban center of the Arabic-Islamic world. Chicken meat was tasteful, reasonably priced and, which was important in places where firewood was scanty, its cooking required less time, and thus less fuel, than red meat. Chicken meat was also a quite universal culinary material. It was used in sour and sweet-sour stews, in which it either replaced red meat, or was cooked together with it. It could be boiled in water and roasted; it could be fried or deep-fried

[327] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 79–89 (fols. 19*l*–22*r*); cf. Ibn Iyās's *maʿāmil al-bayḍ*, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 44.

[328] In effect, the installations providing Cairo with poultry are exceptionally well documented. See John Mandeville, *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, http://www.pinyin.info/books/mandeville/index.html, chapter VII; von Suchem, *Description*, 67; L'Africain, *Description*, 515; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 110; Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 86; Fabri, *Voyage*, 479; von Breydenbach, *Peregrynacya*, 67; Anonyme, in P.-H. Dopp, "Le Caire: Vu par les voyageurs occidentaux du Moyen Age," pt. II, *BSRGE* 24 (1951): 118–19; Joos van Ghistele, *Le Voyage en Egypte de Joos van Ghistele 1482–1483*, ed. Renée Bauwens-Préaux (Le Caire: IFAO, 1976), 55–6; Trevisan, *Relation*, 210–11; Stochove in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 68–9; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 189; Harant, *Voyage*, 211–12; Brown, *Voyage*, 93–4; Coppin, *Voyages*, 145–6; Norden, *Travels*, I, 50, and plate XXIX; le Brun, *Voyage*, 223–5; also mentioned in al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 84. Cf. *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VI, 750; VIII, No. ii.

[329] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 91; cf. a short mention of the event in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 88.

[330] See the accounts quoted above, n. 328.

in sesame oil, parboiled or not.[331] It could be pounded, cut in joints or in halves, or left uncut.[332] In the latter form, it was used whenever cooking in the oven was involved. Such oven preparations included sweet *jawādhib* puddings, in which chicken, roasted in the oven, simply served as a source of tasty juices and fat that ran from the meat onto the pudding cooked below it.[333] Uncut chicken could also be used for making *dajāj maḥshī*, or stuffed chicken. *Dajāj maḥshī* could be either sweet or sour (*ḥāmiḍ*). The stuffing for the sweet version was made of rose jam or of sugar and almonds/pistachios perfumed with rose-water. The sour one was prepared with parsley, mint, caraway, lemon juice, and hazelnuts or almonds. Such dishes could be made of fried, ready to eat chicken, or of chicken which had been lightly parboiled. In the latter case, the cooking continued in the *furn* oven after the fowl had been stuffed.[334]

When used for making *harīsa* porridge,[335] chicken either replaced red meat or accompanied it. In the latter case, it was usually simply thrown into the pot together with meat. "Some people," however, "boiled the chickens, and sautéed them with spices and, having ladled out the porridge, put them on its surface, which was better."[336] It seems that decorating a preparation with chickens or their parts was a rather popular style of presenting dishes.[337] Roasted or cooked in syrup, such a decoration was a source of concern for those who cared for manners: disjointing a chicken could result in spraying the co-eaters with grease.[338]

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[331] In the cookery books, recipes for chicken dishes are sometimes collected in one chapter; see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 357–62; *Wuṣla*, 519–52. In *Kanz*, chicken dishes are included in the chapter "On sweet, sour, and plain foods," 26–36.

[332] For the concise instructions on how to prepare chicken depending on the dish see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 68, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 70–1; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 357–8. On particular chicken preparations in the context of their medical properties see al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 575–6. On chicken in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine in general see Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 73–82.

[333] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 411–12; *Kanz*, 112–13, nn. 293, 294; *Wuṣla*, 633–4. Such a pudding could be also simply mixed with juicy fat coming from chicken stewed in spiced sesame oil, and topped with chicken pieces; see, for example, *Kanz*, 27, n. 44; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 8b.

[334] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 359, 360, 375; *Kanz*, 50, n. 18; 267, n. 9; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 33b; also *Wuṣla*, 525–6.

[335] On *harīsa* porridge see above, chapters II.1.D. "Wheat," pp. 166–7, and II.2. "Meat," pp. 196–7.

[336] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 366.

[337] See al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 108–13 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," where *zīrbāj*, *jurjāniyya*, *fākhitiyya*, *banafsijiyya*, *khūkhiyya*, *harīsat fustuq*, *sitt an-Nūba*, *sikbāj*, and *maṣlūqa* are mentioned as dishes decorated with meat and/or chicken.

[338] See below, pt. II, chapter IV.2.B.6. "Behavior at the table," p. 437.

In stews of red meat, chicken was usually simply jointed and thrown into the pot to be cooked together with meat. Chicken breasts could be also pounded with red meat, as in *nāranjiyya* ("bitter orange dish") or *mudaqqaqa kāfūriyya* ("camphor meatballs").[339] In a dish called *maʾmūniyya*, chicken meat was boiled, cut into strips, pounded, and then thrown on nearly done ground/milled rice cooked with milk, syrup, and tail fat. Then everything was cooked until done and, finally, scented with rose-water and musk.[340] In a version of the dish called *maḍīra*, chicken, cut into joints, was stewed in oil with onions, spices, and yoghurt.[341] In *zīrbāj*, sautéed hens were cut up and simply put in a thick sauce made of sugar syrup cooked with pounded almonds, wine vinegar, starch, egg white, and green mint.[342]

Generally, pounded nuts or almonds were almost *de rigueur* in chicken dishes; so were Chinese or Ceylon cinnamon, dry coriander, and mastic. Chicken dishes could be also seasoned with dry or fresh mint and sometimes with *murrī*. The prevailing medico-culinary theory recommended avoiding garlic and onions in chicken preparations,[343] and indeed, these ingredients were absent from most of the recipes. There were, however, exceptions: *kuzbariyya*, or chicken meat stewed with spices and chopped coriander leaves, was to be fragranced with both garlic and onions.[344] Chicken dishes, usually colored with saffron, were often decorated with eggs.

As ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī observed while commenting on Egyptian cuisine, the regular, savory chicken stews "had nothing in particular, or

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[339] Recipes for *nāranjiyya* in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 6b–7a; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 319; recipes for *mudaqqaqa kāfūriyya*: *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 359; *Wuṣla*, 541–2.

[340] Recipes for *maʾmūniyya* in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 316, 425; *Kanz* , 35, n. 67; 37, n. 71; 271, n. 22; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 10b, 36b; *Wuṣla*, 618–21. For a detailed study of the dish and comparison between its various versions see Maxime Rodinson, "Ma'mūniyya East and West," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 183–97.

[341] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 49, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 41–2; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 321. Generally, however, *maḍīra* was a meat, and not a chicken, dish.

[342] Recipes in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 325; *Wuṣla*, 539; *Kanz*, 30, n. 52; 34, n. 63; 38, n. 75; 26, n. 40 (with no souring agent); Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 8b, 9b.

[343] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 68, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 71; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 358; cf. *Kanz*, 28, n. 47.

[344] *Wuṣla*, 535; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 43a; cf. also a recipe for *mudaqqaqa kāfūriyya*, or meat-and-chicken meatballs to which onions are added, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 359.

very little, different from those consumed elsewhere." Apart from these, however, there were also chicken stews which the Egyptians "prepared with all kinds of sweet substances," and these were "strange."[345] In order to prepare such sweet stews (*muḥallāt*), "they boiled a fowl, then put it in a julep, threw over it crushed hazelnuts or pistachio nuts, poppy seeds or purslane seeds, or roses, and cooked the preparation until it coagulated. Then they seasoned it and removed from fire."[346] Depending on the kind of nuts and seeds of which they were made, the dishes were called *fusṭuqiyya* ("pistachio dish"), *bunduqiyya* ("hazelnut dish"), *khashkhāshiyya* ("poppy seed dish"), *wardiyya* ("rose dish"), or *sitt an-Nūba* ("Nubian lady)," a purslane seed dish named after its black color.[347] Judging by al-Baghdādī's bewilderment, he never happened across sweet chicken stews before his coming to Egypt. Apparently quite popular in Cairo, a combination of chicken meat, nuts/seeds, a sweetening agent, musk and/or rose-water must have been a rarity elsewhere in the Near East.

Actually, a majority of the above-named sweet nutty/seedy chicken stews are described in the Arabic-Islamic medieval cookery books. Most of the books in which these names appear,[348] however, date back to the periods later than al-Baghdādī's lifetime (d. 629/1231). The earliest of the available Arabic-Islamic cookbooks, the fourth/tenth-century *Kitāb*

[345] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 (fol. 47*l*).

[346] Ibid., 191–3 (fols. 47*l*–48*r*).

[347] Ibid., 191–3 (fols. 47*l*–48*r*).

[348] It should be kept in mind that in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture—as reflected in the cookery books—one name was sometimes applied to various dishes. Therefore, of numerous recipes for *bunduqiyyas*, *fusṭuqiyyas*, *khashkhāshiyyas*, and *sitt an-Nūbas* that appear in this kind of literature, only some refer to sweet chicken stews. In *Kanz*, for example, there are three recipes for *fusṭuqiyya*; as all of them call for vinegar, which makes them sour-sweet stews, they cannot be classified as sweet stews (*Kanz*, 28, 32, 36). Of the four recipes for *bunduqiyya*, one calls for vinegar, which excludes its classification as sweet stew, while another is a meat, and not a chicken dish which, moreover, does not call for *bunduq* (hazelnuts) despite its name (*Kanz*, 26, 33, 39, 266). Of the two recipes for *khashkhāshiyya*, one describes a dish made of red meat (*Kanz*, 23, 28). As for *sitt an-Nūba*, there are three recipes, of which one features a dish made of chicken and sugar; surprisingly enough, the list of ingredients does not include purslane seeds, otherwise a fundamental ingredient in this preparation; instead, almonds, pistachios, milk, grapes and black raisins are called for (*Kanz*, 32, 35, 57). Apart from these three, there is one more recipe for *sitt an-Nūba* that, however, is hidden behind a name "purslane seeds preparation" (*Kanz*, 38, n. 77). At the same time, what al-Baghdādī calls *wardiyya*, in *Kanz* is named "rose jam" (*ward murabbā*, *Kanz*, 38, n. 76). Similar remarks may be applied to other culinary manuals. Taking into consideration that the recipes differed so significantly, we can in fact never be sure what was the nature of, for instance, *fusṭaqiyya*, *bunduqiyya*, *khashkhāshiyya* and *sitt an-Nūba* dishes as mentioned in al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 92 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

aṭ-Ṭabīkh compiled in Iraq by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, does not include recipes for sweet chicken stews at all. In another Iraqi cookery book, Muḥammad al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* (the compilation of which might have coincided with the lifetime of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī), *fustuqiyya* is the only representative of sweet chicken stews.[349] In every later (i.e. post-seventh/thirteenth-century) Near Eastern cookery books the recipes for this kind of dishes are more numerous.[350] Significantly, each of these books is, most probably, at least partly of Egyptian origin.

The way in which recipes for sweet chicken stews are distributed in the cookery books seems to confirm ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī's comments on the exclusively Egyptian character of these dishes. Moreover, one may conclude that such dishes were indeed unheard of outside Egypt in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries. However, the idea of making sweetmeats of chicken seems to have reached certain parts of the Near East not later than in the first decades of the seventh/thirteenth century, so that a recipe for *fusṭuqiyya* dish could be included in the 623/1226 copy of an Iraqi cookbook compiled by Muḥammad al-Baghdādī. But even if the idea of making sweet preparations out of chicken meat spread outside Egypt, it apparently remained vague and uncommon enough that ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, a traveler interested in food by virtue of his medical profession, had never heard of it before coming to Egypt. Be it because of the Cairenes' particular taste preferences or because of the abundance of chickens, sugar, honey, and nuts in the local markets, these kinds of dishes might have been one of the Cairene culinary peculiarities, only occasionally (if at all) consumed in other urban centers of the Arabic-Islamic world.[351]

As for other fowls, we do not have too many details regarding the ways they were prepared. Most probably, they, like chickens, were also roasted, stewed, and stuffed.[352] Sparrows, which seem to have been particularly

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[349] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb a-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 67, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 68–9.

[350] Moreover, the author of one of them devoted an entire chapter to sweet chicken stews; see *Wuṣla*, 542–6.

[351] Actually, I am not able to say whether the late Ottoman *tavuk gögsü*, or breast of chicken, was a modified version of the medieval Cairene sweet chicken stews, or own invention of the Ottoman cooks. It was made of flesh of chicken wings, "beaten to an absolutely smooth pulp . . . The pulp was then cooked with milk, sugar, and a little powdered sahleb root [salep, ground orchid bulbs], till it became a thick mass. Poured into a dessert dish, it surface was garnished with powdered cinnamon;" Tugay, *Three Centuries*, 260.

[352] In *Kanz*, for example, there are four recipes calling for pigeon/dove: one is the recipe for a dish called *kishk* (after *kishk*, or dried biscuits of wheat and yoghurt) in which pigeons

popular, were sometimes fried with oil, salt and seasonings, sometimes together with chicken meat, and at other times with eggs, so that a kind of omelette was prepared.[353] Sparrows could also be pickled to be consumed as the so-called *bawārid*, or cold snacks. Preparing such pickles involved splitting cleaned birds through the breasts and stuffing them with a mixture of salt, Chinese cinnamon, and mastic. Put in special jars of glass (*qaṭarmīz zujāj*), they were covered with salted water and left for some time to ripen.[354] One recipe instructed the cook to "clean [pickled] sparrows of salt, intestines, and hearts," which suggests that these birds, like fish, could be also preserved by covering them, ungutted, with salt. When finally cleaned, salted sparrows were washed four times with wine vinegar and covered with oil mixed with lime juice. They were served immediately, cut into small pieces and seasoned with spices, parsley, and rue.[355]

As in most of the world cuisines, bird eggs were almost as popular in medieval Cairo as was bird meat. Although the recipes generally did not specify the kind of eggs to be used in a given preparation, it may be taken for granted that chicken eggs were the most commonly consumed.[356] Widely used in many types of cooking, eggs could be fried, scrambled, and pickled or applied in meat or chicken dishes as a decoration. In sweet preparations eggs were rarely used—only sometimes the albumen was employed, mostly for its being a good foaming agent. Most likely, Egyptians did not eat raw eggs.

The most typical egg dishes were those called *ʿujaj* and *mubaʿtharāt*. Although the recipes do not always allow one to determine what the final form of a given dish actually was; "omelettes" and "scrambled eggs" are probably the most appropriate equivalents of the two Arabic terms mentioned above. Omelettes, or *ʿujaj*, were usually very rich: prepared

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are used as an alternative to red meat or chicken (*Kanz*, 45, n. 102); the other is a recipe for a dish in which pigeon is stewed with saffron, mint, crushed hazelnuts, pepper, rosebuds, and spice mix (ibid., 52, n. 122); in a dish called *al-firākh al-maṣūṣ*, pigeons, used as an option for red meat or chicken, are stewed in broth together with sugar, vinegar, spice mix, mint, pepper, mastic, Ceylon cinnamon and honey (ibid 55, n. 133); in the recipe for okra dish (*bāmiya*), pigeon appears once more as an option for red meat or chicken (ibid., 273, n. 29).

353 See, for example, recipes for *al-muṭajjan min al-ʿaṣāfīr wa-l-farārīkh wa-d-dajāj*, *Kanz*, 59, n. 143; for *ʿujja bi-ʿaṣāfīr*, ibid., 70, n. 170; and for *al-ʿaṣāfīr bi-l-bayḍ*, ibid., 59, n. 143.

354 Ibid., 58–9, n. 141; *Wuṣla*, 695–6; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 406.

355 *Wuṣla*, 695.

356 In a recipe for *ʿujja li-l-bāh*, or "omelette for potency," yolks of pigeon eggs are recommended (*Kanz*, 76, n. 187).

in a soapstone pan with spices and a lot of oil, they could include fried meat, fried sparrows, fried chicken livers, cheese, or *ṭirrīkh*—salted fish.[357] Scrambled eggs, or *mubaʿtharāt*, could be made with meat, too, but generally preparations of this kind were not as rich as omelettes. They could also be made of simple combination of eggs, oil, and spices, with or without onions.[358] The street version of scrambled eggs was seasoned with pepper, Ceylon cinnamon, and cumin,[359] but the cookery books recommended a more sophisticated spice mix. It was supposed to include ginger, galingale (*khulanjān*), Ceylon cinnamon, saffron, pepper, cumin, thyme, dried rosebuds (*zirr al-ward*), and nard.[360] Individual recipes sometimes also called for coriander and caraway, while omelettes were additionally seasoned with *murrī*.

Interestingly, some fried eggs preparations called for boiled eggs. Such was the case of a dish called *bayḍ maqlī*, or "fried eggs," and *bayḍ muṭajjan* or "sautéed eggs."[361] It seems that such dishes could be eaten both as a warm course and as *bawārid*, or cold snacks. Hard boiled eggs could be also used as stuffing for *awṣāt*, rolls made of flatbread and meat[362] or, devoid of the white part, as stuffing for *makhfiyya* meatballs.[363] Eggs could also be pickled. To prepare *bayḍ mukhallal*, or "eggs in vinegar," one had to sprinkle shelled boiled eggs with salt, dry coriander and Chinese cinnamon, arrange them in a glass jar, and cover them with vinegar.[364] The details could differ: in a version called *bayḍ mukhardal*, or "mustarded eggs," for example, boiled eggs were covered with salt and cumin in the

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[357] See *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣinā'a 74, fol. 109b (*miqlā birām li-l-narjasiyyaat wa-l-ʿujaj*). For recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 76, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 84; and *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 391, where *ṭirrīkh* fishes, fried in sesame oil, are cleaned of bones, heads and tails, after which eggs are broken on them. Also *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 379, where chicken livers are added to scrambled eggs; and *Kanz*, 80, n. 200, where omelette is prepared with chicken livers. See also *Wuṣla*, 716–18. For more details on *ṭirrīkh*, and on salted fish in general, see below, chapter II.4. "Fish," pp. 222–3.

[358] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 384–85.

[359] It was sold by the *bawārdiyyūn*, or sellers of cold snacks; see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 160.

[360] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 384; *Kanz*, 79, n. 98.

[361] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 383; *Kanz*, 78, n. 196.

[362] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 382.

[363] Ibid., 351. However, to make paste for *makābīb al-Yahūd*, or "Jewish meatballs" raw eggs were used. Broken and beaten, they were mixed with other ingredients: pounded meat, pistachios and spices. Such meatballs were fried in sesame oil; ibid., 379).

[364] Ibid., 397; also a recipe in *Kanz*, 72, n. 174, where the preparation is richer in spices and seasonings, and where it is suggested that the eggs be eaten with cold *sikbāj* meat, perfumed with lots of rose-water; also ibid., 74–75, n. 182; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 15b.

morning, to be seasoned with vinegar, mustard seeds, mint and spices (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*), and saffron as late as in the evening.[365]

4. Fish

Not surprisingly, aquatic animals were not typical fare of the desert Arabs and the fact that the Sunna of the Prophet does not even mention the consumption of fish is a natural consequence of the lack of interest within Muḥammad's milieu in this kind of food. Fish dishes were not among the favorite foods in the *Arabian Nights* either, even though the markets of Baghdad and Cairo, unlike those of Mecca and Medina, abounded in fish. Both the Baghdadis and Cairenes ate a lot of it; nevertheless, fish dishes are almost entirely ignored in the *Nights*, as the rich did not enjoy them, and the poor did not crave them. Even Jūdar, the fictitious fisherman of Cairo, never eats fish nor feeds it to his family. Rather, he sells his daily catch and spends the earnings on meat and vegetables.[366]

Apparently, fish dishes were not particularly esteemed in the Arabic-Islamic culinary repertoire of the Middle Ages. Those who had a choice would rather not go for it. As historical rumor has it, caliph Hārūn ar-Rashīd was once served an extremely refined preparation made of over 150 fish tongues created in the shape of a fish. Evidently unwilling to eat it, the caliph tried, however, to find some good excuse for his refusal. The first thing which came to his mind was to accuse his host (and, at the same time, his brother) of being profligate. Such accusation, in turn, enabled him to order his own servant to go to the street and press the dish, together with the precious bowl on which it was presented, into the hands of a passer-by.[367] As claims to frugality or austerity laid by Hārūn ar-Rashīd cannot be taken too seriously, one is entitled to presume that it was the fish ingredient rather than the presumed 1,000 dirhams paid for it, that made a big spender like Hārūn ar-Rashīd successfully avoid eating the dish.

As for the rulers residing in Cairo, this kind of sophistication was not generally their style. But it is impossible to say whether they ate fish at all. The records referring to fish consumption in the context of the Cairene ruling elites are almost nonexistent—all we know is that the Fatimids

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365 *Kanz*, 74, n. 181; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 16a.
366 "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," Night 608.
367 Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj adh-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar* (Cairo, n.d.), III, 280.

used to distribute packs of fish and bowls of striped mullet on Christmas Day among their subjects,[368] and that in Mamluk times fish was served, among other foods, at the banquet held to celebrate the inauguration of sultan Barqūq's madrasa in 788/1386.[369] All in all, as far as the royal menus are concerned, the non-fiction sources seem to confirm what can be inferred from the *Arabian Nights*: for some reason, fish did not please the palates of the ruling elites of the Arabic-Islamic world. Interestingly, in the medical context, fish was generally considered beneficial.[370]

Nevertheless, fish, both fresh and salted, was eaten in Egypt in quantities huge enough to make taxes imposed on fisheries and fish sale a source of the considerable income for the state.[371] The share of fish in the Cairenes' diet, however, varied according to the class: while it was probably an occasional element of the menu for the well-to-do, for the poor it constituted, to use the dieticians' vocabulary, the main source of proteins and fats. One fourth/tenth-century Syrian visitor to Egypt tried to convince his readers that the Egyptians' fondness for fish referred, above all, to fish heads which the Egyptians liked so much that "if they saw a Syrian buying a fish they would follow him, and if he threw the fish's head out, they would collect it."[372] Obviously enough, the record, apparently presenting a hearsay or an account of the local junkmen's diet, should not be taken too seriously. Generally, there was no need to follow a Syrian in order to collect fish heads—the Nile waters and the salt Delta lakes on the Mediterranean coast were generous enough to provide cheap fish for everybody. The Mediterranean species, brought by camel or boat from Damietta, Burullus, Tinnīs, Nastarū, and the Alexandria area,[373] as well as the Nile catch, were sold in the Fishermen Market in al-Fusṭāṭ and the Fish Market in Cairo.[374]

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368 Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 104.

369 Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, I/2, 372.

370 See *EI2,* VIII, "Samak" by F. Vire. For a more detailed discussion on fish in the Islamic dietary law see Cook, "Dietary Law," 237–47. For remarks on fish as an item of the medieval Middle Eastern diet see also Ashtor, "Essay," 141–42.

371 See al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 108; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 250; Rabie, *Financial System*, 88–9.

372 Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 205.

373 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 108; see also Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 109, where it is said that the sea species were brought to Cairo "in the winter and early spring."

374 On Sūq as-Sammākīn in al-Fusṭāṭ, see Ṣārim ad-Dīn Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-Intiṣār li-Wāsiṭat ʿAqd al-Amṣār* (Beirut, n.d.), 33; on Sūq as-Samak in al-Qāhira, see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 104.

Since fish, by nature, is an extremely local ingredient,[375] any attempt to discuss the Egyptian species, if undertaken by the European travelers, was doomed to fail. Mikołaj Radziwiłł was greatly surprised at the sight of local fishermen who, diving in the Nile's turbid waters, caught fish with their hands and usually emerged "with one piece in each hand and the third one in their mouth." Nevertheless, he managed to note that the fishes "are large . . . , the most popular ones are similar to burbot but larger; the others are like salmon; and there is also some big white fish. All fishes from this river are very tasteful and fat, though unhealthy, since the bed of Nilus is of clay, and not of stone."[376] Almost a century later father Antonius Gonzales made an effort to describe both the Mediterranean and the Nile fish in a more orderly and comprehensive way, devoting an entire chapter of his travel account to the local aquatic animals. Apart from whales, dolphins, and swordfish, the species identified by Gonzales included tuna fish, which he ate in Jerusalem;[377] sole, which he saw in the Jaffa port; Nile tilapia, which was delicious when roasted or fried; smoked "herring," the wonderful taste of which was unequaled even by what was made by the Dutch;[378] and equally delicious Nile "sardines," which were fried ungutted.[379] Finally, there was also eel which, caught in Damietta, was salted and exported in barrels to other countries.[380] Naturally enough, the task of registering and classifying species caught by Egyptian fishermen was much easier for the Arab-speaking authors. Despite the fact that ichthyology could not have been a popularly comprehended or appreciated science, some of them, such as the famous Maghrebian geographer Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Idrīsī, or the equally famous Yāqūt, managed to assemble impressive collections of

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375 See Charles Perry, "Medieval Arab Fish," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 479.

376 Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 87.

377 Gonzales, *Voyage*, 646.

378 As Gonzales finally managed to learn, the "*hareng saur*" proved to be an ordinary Nile fish called "*saboucke*" which was processed in a way comparable to kippering: first, it was cleaned, salted and left in salt or brine in an earthenware pot. After two days it was taken out, dried, and smoked in the chimney; ibid., 654–655.

379 Ibid., 662; on the Nile "sardines," see below, p. 213.

380 Gonzales, *Voyage*, 662. On the Nile fish see also von Bretten, *Voyages*, 41–2; Brown, *Voyage*, 112–13; Le Sieur Granger, *Relation*, 239; Thenaud, *Voyage*, 31, informs that the Nile fish, preserved in salt, was exported as far as to Flanders. On fisheries on the Mediterranean coast see, for example, Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 27, where it is said that great quantities of salted fish were exported from there to Syria, Rhodes, Candia, and Cairo; also von Suchem, *Description*, 81–2, where it is noted that Damietta "is chiefly inhabited by fishermen, and very many merchants come together there with their ships, and buy great quantities of fish exceeding cheap, which they export to all parts of the world."

fish names.[381] Yet such lists, unique as they are, are not of much help in defining the particular items eaten by the local population and, as such, are of little use from the food historian's point of view.

As far as the names of edible fish are concerned, the most informative is probably the *Delectable War*.[382] Among dozens of personified edible goods mentioned in the work, about thirty varieties of fish appear. The list includes species such as *rāy* (Egyptian variety of salmon), *labīs* (*Labeo niloticus*, a variety of carp), *tūn* (tuna fish), *būrī* (striped or gray mullet, *Mugil cephalus*), *bulṭī* (*Tilapia nilotica*),[383] *ḥūt* (a name applied primarily to very large fishes and to cetaceans), *qarmūṭ* (*Clarias anguillaris*, a variety of catfish),[384] *qishr bayāḍ* (*Lates niloticus*, Nile perch),[385] *absāriyya* (sardines), *bunnī* (*Barbus bynni*, the Nile barbel), *raʾād* (electric ray),[386] *lāj*, *ṭūbār*, and, somewhat unexpectedly, also varieties imported from abroad, such as Eufrates fish, fish from Homs, *Ṭabarī* fish, or fish from al-Barada river.[387] Despite the fact that most of the medieval Arabic-Islamic recipes do not specify the variety of fish they call for, the data referring to the consumption of some of these species in Cairo can be identified.

Those few which appear in the cookery books include *būrī* (striped mullet), which was caught in the salt lakes of the Mediterranean coast and from which spicy and intensively aromatic "shrouded *būrī*" (*būrī mukaffan*) was made;[388] *zūmakh*, from which a fish dish which "sold well

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[381] Al-Idrīsī, *Nuzha*, I, 35–7. The list composed by Yāqūt (the sixth-seventh/twelfth-thirteenth centuries) includes the names of majority of 79 species which, according to this author, were caught in Tinnīs, or the area where "sea fish enter the Nile waters;" Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 53–4. On aquatic animals see also an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāja*, X, 312–23; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 103–7 (fols. 25*l*–26*l*); and al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 146–58, where fishes as food items are discussed. For detailed presentation of the question of fishing, fish species, and the role of fish in the diet of ancient Egypt, see Darby, *Food*, I, 337–404. For species traditionally consumed by the Copts see Wassef, *Pratiques*, 338–45. For a short list of Arabic names of fish species see *EI2,* VIII, "Samak" by F. Vire.

[382] The narrative is discussed in detail in "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57–64.

[383] According to Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 43, once there was a fish called *al-bulṭī al-Fayyūmī*; however, it disappeared from Fayyum in the beginning of the fifteenth century.

[384] Cf. Wassef, *Pratiques*, 339, 342.

[385] Cf. ibid., 339.

[386] Also mentioned by Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 43. Interestingly, ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī defined *raʾād* as not edible, al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 105 (fol. 26*r*).

[387] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 102–3 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." Apart from the species named above, the text mentions also names such *shalābī*, *zaqāzīq*, *shabālāt*, *ṭayyār*, *mashqūq*, *umm ʿUbayda*, *qarānīṭ*, *qūns*, *labt*, *lahāla* or *lafāsh*.

[388] For recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 389; *Kanz*, 99, n. 254; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 18a.

in the market" was prepared;[389] and *samak lujjī* ("deep-water fish") which, stuffed with salt and fried in vinegar, oil and spices, "kept well in travel."[390] Furthermore, a recipe of Iraqi origin copied by an Egyptian compiler calls for *shabbūṭ* (*Barbus grypus Heckel*, a large Iraqi carp).[391] In *Kanz*, apart from *labīs*, or carp,[392] *samak dibb* (D-B) is mentioned, apparently some salt-fermented fish of which "royal Alexandrian fish paste" was made.[393] In the same book there appear *absāriyya* fishes, which are called for in the recipe for *absāriyya mukaffana* ("shrouded *absāriyya*"), a cold, fragrant preparation made of fried ungutted fish.[394]

The *absāriyya*, although literally meaning "sardines," were not exactly what is commonly understood by that name, that is any small oily fish related to herring and belonging to highly complex *Clupeidae* family. Nor were they young pilchards, which is another contemporary meaning of the name "sardines." Egyptian medieval *absāriyya* seem to have designated any juvenile Nile fish caught in the autumn, when the Nile floodwater receded from the fields back to the river bed. The fish, whose species apparently included Nile tilapia (*bulṭī*), Nile salmon (*rāy*), and Nile barbel (*bunnī*) were caught when about one-finger long and were fried ungutted.[395] In fact, late autumn seems to have been *the* season for the Nile fish. After the mature specimen had been joined by those recently hatched, the fish became so plentiful that it could be easily taken from the water by hand. Or, still easier, by simple "harvesting" those which were trapped in the muddy fields after the floodwater had receded.[396] In the winter and early spring sea fish prevailed in the Cairo markets.[397] Even with the abundance and variety of local species, fish was also brought to Cairo from abroad, as suggested in the *Delectable War*. Foreign species, if indeed imported to Cairo, had to be either salted and stone-dried, or salt-fermented, like

389 *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 393.
390 Ibid., 410.
391 Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 75, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 82; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 389; cf. Perry, "Medieval Arab Fish," 480.
392 *Kanz*, 9–10 (instruction on how to debone the fish).
393 Ibid., 102 n. 262.
394 *Absāriyya* were macerated in a mixture of garlic, salt and coriander and covered with a marinade combined of garlic, oil, spices, herbs, vinegar and *ṭaḥīna*; for recipe see ibid., 96 n. 247.
395 An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 263–4; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 107–8; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 655. See also below, p. 219.
396 Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 97–8; on the same method applied by ancient Egyptians see Darby, *Food*, I, 338.
397 Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 109.

"*ṣīr* from Socotra," which is called for in a recipe included in one of the Cairene cookery books.[398]

Because of possible changes over the last 500–1,000 years in the aquatic fauna and in the Arabic nomenclature referring to it, it is sometimes impossible to identify names used in the medieval Arab literature.[399] The unclear and sometimes inconsistent nature of existing written records makes such a task even more difficult. Such is, for example, the case of *būrī*, a name generally known to designate "striped mullet." Indeed, *būrī* as mentioned in the medieval recipes for *būrī mukaffan*, or as distributed by the Fatimids on Christmas Day, could be striped mullet. But *būrī* might also have meant something else. Ibn Bassām uses it to denote various species of fish, such as Sh-Sh-F, *lāj*, and *ṭūbār* that, ungutted and with their gills stuffed with salt, were kept in coarsely ground salt. Salt was shaken off from the gills before weighting the fish for the customer and, upon his request, fish could be scaled and gutted.[400] Ibn Bassām's remarks suggest that the term *būrī* could in fact be any salt-preserved, unfermented fish, brought to Cairo from the fisheries of the northern Delta, where *būrī* was caught, and unloaded on Sāḥil al-Būrī, or "Harbor of Būrī" which occupied a fragment of the Nile shore in al-Fusṭāṭ.[401]

In most of recipes for fish dishes, the species did not really matter and was usually unspecified: most of the techniques, ingredients, stuffings, and sauces were universal and meant for fish. What the recipes do mention relatively frequently, and what apparently mattered more then species, was if the fish was salted (*māliḥ*, *mamlūḥ*) or fresh (*ṭārī*). In cooked preparations, fish could be fried in an iron pan (*miqlā ḥadīd li-s-samak*),[402] deep-fried in the *ṭājin*-type of pan, or roasted in the *tannūr*- or *furn*-type oven.[403] The ways of preparing dishes of fresh versus those using salted fish did not

[398] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 408.

[399] Cf. Darby, *Food*, I, 355.

[400] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 54. On "fish imported into the town" and protected with salt, see also ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 57) and Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 179. The editor of Ibn Bassām's work maintains that *būrī* were "various kinds of fish, salted and dried in the sun;" Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 54, n. 2.

[401] On "the fish called *būrī*," which was caught in lake Nastarū, lake Tinnīs and Alexandrian lake, see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 108; on "Sāḥil al-Būrī" see Ibn Duqmāq, *Intiṣār*, 35; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 344.

[402] *Wuṣla*, MS Ṣināʾa 74, fol. 109b.

[403] On fish fried and roasted by the street cooks see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 178–9; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56–7; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33 and 24 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 57 and 49).

differ much, except that salted fish might sometimes have required soaking in order to remove the salt.[404] Salted fish, unlike salt-fermented fish, but similarly to fresh fish, was prepared for consumption by cooking over fire. The simplest of such preparations were probably those named after meat dishes or after the most characteristic ingredient: fish à la *sikbāj*, fish à la *zīrbāj*, fish à la *summāqiyya*, à la *kuzbariyya*, etc. The recipe for fish which was to be made à la *sikbāj*, for example, recommended frying flour-coated pieces of fish in sesame oil. When done, the fish was put in a sauce prepared of onions fried in sesame oil, pepper, spices, saffron, vinegar, and honey.[405] But not all of the fried or roasted fish preparations were so simple. A majority of them, particularly those which required stuffing or preparing a sophisticated sauce, demanded more effort.[406]

Usually, fish dishes were rather strongly spiced and aromatized. The standard set of ingredients to be applied by the street fish fryers included pepper, caraway, coriander, garlic, sumac, as well as good oil, *ṭaḥīna*, lemon juice, parsley, and crushed roasted Syrian walnuts.[407] These items were also the basic ingredients of fish stuffings and sauces. To this composition almonds (though not as often as walnuts), thyme, salt, cinnamon, mint, saffron, and vinegar could be added. Mustard seeds and ginger were sometimes called for, too. Onions were used, but much less often than garlic. Unlike most meat dishes, fish recipes rarely called for cereals, vegetables or fruits.[408] The concept of counteracting salt with sugar, applied by the Middle Eastern cooks in meat preparations, was not generally followed in fish dishes. Nevertheless honey, raisins, and molasses are called for in a few otherwise atypical recipes for salted fish.[409] Interestingly, there is no evidence that contemporary Egyptian (or, broader, Levantine) avoidance

[404] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 75–6, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 83–4; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 390–2; *Kanz*, 94, n. 240; 97, n. 250.

[405] *Kanz*, 97, n. 249. Another version of the recipe was equally simple: the set of ingredients included coriander, vinegar, saffron, and celery leaf; see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 74, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 82; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 389.

[406] See, for example, recipes for fish in *Kanz*, 89–98; 182–3, n. 494 (fish sauce); *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 392–3 (fish sauces).

[407] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56.

[408] The mustard fish sauce whose ingredients include three ounces of jujubes is probably the only example of a recipe for fish dish that called for fruits; for recipe see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 407–8; *Kanz*, 183, n. 496.

[409] See, for example, recipe for paste of salt-fermented fish from Socotra in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 408–9, or recipe for sauce for fried and salted fish in ibid., 392–393; also recipe for mustard fish sauce, ibid., 407–408; *Kanz*, 183, n. 496. On the concept of

of mixing fish and milk products in one meal was observed in the medieval Middle East. This combination (considered unhealthy today) appears in a number of old Arabic-Islamic recipes where fish and yoghurt are put together.[410] The same concerns modern Egyptian belief that fish mixed with eggs causes severe stomach problems.[411]

Cooked fish preparations could, it seems, be eaten both warm and cold. Of the latter, fish à la *mukaffan* was probably the most distinctive: it was fried and macerated in a marinade of vinegar, parsley, mint, celery, dried rosebuds (*zirr ward*), cardamom, spikenard, cloves, *ṭaḥīna*, saffron, and onions.[412] Interestingly, fish could also be prepared so as to withstand a long journey. The recipe for such a preparation recommended:

> Take fresh fish, clean it of scales and bones, split its belly, and remove what is inside. Wash the fish well and sprinkle it with salt. Leave it in salt for some time, and then put it on a large matt [lit. "basket"]. Put another matt over the fish. Put everything on a flat stone, and another stone over the upper matt, and leave it like that until the fish's juices go out. Cut the fish into small pieces and sprinkle good flour on it. Set a deep pan over the fire and put sesame oil in it, or any good oil you choose to deep-fry fish in it. Fry the fish thoroughly, so that no water is left in it. Take wine vinegar, toasted coriander, toasted caraway, and all other spices, and saffron, and shake the mixture. Put the fried fish in the mixture so that the fish is all submerged. Leave it in a glass container or a pickling jar, and pour the vinegar over it, and leave it for as long as you need, for it stays for days and does not go bad. And there are people who travel with it to distant places, and the fish does not go bad.[413]

The spicy, nice-smelling, cooked fish dishes constituted only a part of the fish menu available to Cairenes. The other part of it was made up by dishes prepared of salt-fermented, or pickled fish. The two differed from each other in consistency, texture, taste, smell, and the way they were consumed. Actually, the exact meaning of medieval fish pickles' names

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"sugar salting" as practiced in Scandinavia see Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 399–400.

[410] Perry, "Medieval Arab Fish," 482; Darby, *Food*, I, 400; for recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 75, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 83; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 390; see also references in Perry, "Medieval Arab Fish," 482.

[411] Darby, *Food*, I, 400.

[412] Particular recipes for the dish differ slightly as far as the ingredients of the marinade are concerned; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 389; *Kanz*, 96, n. 247 (*absāriyya*); 99, n. 254; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 18a.

[413] *Kanz*, 93, n. 237; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 18b; cf. the recipe for *samak lujjī*, in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 410.

has been lost and an attempt to define features of particular preparations can be undertaken today only by comparing them with contemporary food items. After all, authors of historical accounts were not food technologists and, as such, were not fully informed about the details related to the pickled fish production. However, as using the new to define the old cannot produce perfect results, some subtle differences between particular products of the medieval Egyptian fish fermenting industry have to remain unclear.

Most probably, ancient Egyptians were the first to both cure fish with salt and to prepare fish pickles.[414] But pickling fish was by no means an exclusive specialty of the Nile valley: all the ancient and post-ancient world, from Gibraltar to Vietnam, salted and fermented fish. Roman *salsamenta* and *garum*, Egyptian fish *mawāliḥ*, as well as Asian fermented fish sauces, were all products of a similar idea to salt fish and let it ripen. "Ripe" here means "fermented" and "fermented" means "pungent." Generally, the thin line between "pungent" and "decomposed" made the natural limits of what the nostrils, palates, and stomachs could stand as far as fish preserving was concerned. What was below the line was tabooed for many, though not for all. Scandinavians for example, renowned for their peculiar predilection for offensively smelling fish, used to bury salmon and herring in the ground for days or months.[415] The medieval Egyptians would rather not do such things. Their Mediterranean tastes, which would appreciate the sharp aroma and acidic flavor of fermented fish,[416] would not accept rottenness in fish. The Arabic-Islamic cooks might have had

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[414] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 38. Preserving fish in salt was practiced in Egypt since at least the Dynastic Period; Darby, *Food*, I, 369.

[415] The longer it was buried, the longer it was supposed to keep. "Paradoxically," as a food historian observes, "the longer it has been buried, the more it resembles in smell and texture something rotten;" see Kurlansky, *Salt*, 401. Icelanders, for their part, horrify tourists with *hákarl*, a local specialty made of Greenland shark meat cut in strips, laid in clean gravel beds and, after several weeks, washed and sun-dried in special sheds. Interestingly, E.N. Anderson stresses that culture—apart from an innate tendency of humans to find some scents attractive and other unattractive—plays an enormous role in defining what smells "good" and what smells "bad." "The question is not whether smell preferences are generic or cultural, but how genetic ability and cultural preferences interact;" see Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 73. For discussion of various determinants of human food choices see also articles in *The Psychology of Human Food Selection*, ed. Lewis M. Barker (Westport, CT: AVI, 1982).

[416] And, indeed, "a glass jar with minced fish pickles going from Alexandria to Old Cairo," or "salted tuna fish sent as a present to the same town from Qayrawan" could have been nice gifts to those who received the items; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 126.

their cures for bad smelling meat; bad smelling fish, however, was to be unconditionally thrown away on the rubbish heaps outside the town.[417]

Remarkably enough, pickled fish was one of the cheapest food items which could be purchased in medieval Egyptian markets. As two Arab travelers observed in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries, *ṣīr* and *ṣaḥna* were what the common Egyptians and Cairenes fed on. These observations, noted down by an Iraqi and a Maghrebian, suggest that the two food articles were not as common in the home country of either of them.[418] Of the two products *ṣaḥna* is probably easier to define: it was a paste made of *ṣīr* which was minced, mixed with spices, oil, and salt and left to macerate for a week or more. For a better-off consumer the *ṣaḥna* would be prepared in quite a refined form.[419]

As for *ṣīr* itself, or the product of which the fish paste was made, Charles Perry suggests it had to be unsalted, dried, and rock-hard fish, "probably available in the markets in a ready-ground form."[420] His conclusion is apparently based on a medieval Egyptian recipe (*ṣīr* is not to be found in the Iraqi ones) in which *ṣīr maṭḥūn*, or ground *ṣīr*, is called for.[421] Moreover, another recipe, which Perry did not consider and which recommends to "take *ṣīr*, dissolve it in the urn and leave it for three or two days until it softens," may be used to confirm that *ṣīr* was dried fish.[422] But there are also recipes which exclude such a possibility, if only because they provide evidence that *ṣīr* was pickled in brine and that it could be chopped without having been left for days in order to soften. *Ṣīr* preparations as described in *Wuṣla* and *Kanz* are made of *ṣīr* which is served with "a little

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[417] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 57); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 179; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 55.

[418] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 197 (fol. 49*r*); Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 28. Cf. also Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 126, where fish pickles are mentioned as "food of the poor."

[419] Such refined versions of *ṣaḥna* involved mixing minced fish with variety of spices and seasonings, such as salt, garlic, ginger, madder, spikenard, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, caraway, coriander, thyme, mint, pepper, cinnamon, saffron, sesame oil, mastic, dill, rosebuds, vinegar, or lemon juice; the seasoned fish paste was left for some time to ripen. For recipes for *ṣaḥna* see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 405, 408–9; *Kanz*, 99–103, 275–6; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 18b–19b; *Wuṣla*, 696. Judging by the remarks of Ibn Mubārak Shāh, some people in Cairo of the late Mamluk epoch believed that *ṣaḥna* whetted the appetite (indeed, as any salt-fermented fish, it contained a high level of glutamate, a substance with taste-enhancing effects), strengthened the stomach and moderated/soothed the phlegm; see Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 18b. Interestingly, in Baghdad of the early Abbasids *ṣaḥna* was one of food items the consumption of which was considered a dishonor to a gentleman; see al-Washshā, *Muwashshā*, 192.

[420] Perry, "Medieval Arab Fish," 484; also idem, "Familiar Foods," 281, 405, n. 2.

[421] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 409.

[422] *Kanz*, 102, n. 262.

of its brine, green lemon juice, oil, *zaʿtar* and flesh of lemon," or which is cut into small pieces and mixed with a sauce made of "oil, green lemon juice, dry *zaʿtar*, chopped parsley, mint, rue, and a little bit of pounded garlic."[423] Also according to the data provided by Ibn Bassām, *ṣīr*, salted and kept in brine, had little to do with unsalted, dried fish.[424]

That *ṣīr* was not stone-dried fish, but fish salted and brined, is confirmed by an-Nuwayrī and al-Maqrīzī.[425] While commenting on the taxes imposed on Egyptian fisheries, the latter reports that "when the Nile recedes, and the water goes back from the fields to the river . . . the nets are set and, while the water draws off, the fish come, carried by the running water. The nets stop them from flowing [further down], so they gather in the nets. Then they are taken ashore, put on mats, salted, and then put in urns. As soon as the contents of the urns becomes ripe, it is sold. It is called *mulūḥa* and *ṣīr*, and is made only of fishes which are a finger-long, and no others."[426] An-Nuwayrī, from whom al-Maqrīzī apparently copied a part of his account, defines also the species which were used for the purpose. These were Nile tilapia (*bulṭī*), Nile salmon (*rāy*), Nile barbel (*bunnī*), and *Synodontis schall* (*shāl*), the latter being the length of the spam.[427]

While explaining the nature of *ṣīr*, al-Maqrīzī uses the term *mulūḥa*. Judging upon the context in which it appears, it is difficult to gather whether the two terms were synonymous or designated two different things. Literally, *mulūḥa* means "saltiness." The term, when referred to fish macerated in salt in jars, connotes the concentrated salty brine rather than the fish itself. But medieval authors used other terms to designate such a brine: it is called "broth [*maraqa*] of *ṣīr*" in one source,[428] while in another it is mentioned as "water of the salt fish" or "sharp sauce [*murrī*]

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[423] *Wuṣla*, 694–5; *Kanz*, 95–6; some of these recipes involved frying of *ṣīr*, an operation which, in the case of salt-fermented fish, was rather atypical.

[424] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 55.

[425] But, of course, dried fish must have been there, too. Harant, *Voyage*, 140, mentions fish which was dried in the sun on the Red Sea coast. Herodotus was even more informative: "some of this folk, however, live entirely on fish, which are gutted as soon as caught, and then hung up in the sun: when dry, they are used as food;" *Herodotus*, II, 92.

[426] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 107–8; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 263–4. According to these authors, this kind of fishes, when fresh, were called *absāriyya* and were eaten fried; for *absāriyya* cf. above, p. 213.

[427] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 263–4. Ibn Bassām confirmed that the Nile salmon was processed into *ṣīr*. But elsewhere he also suggested, somewhat confusingly, that in fact any species could fit: "if the fish dealer had anything unsold from the previous day, he is to make *ṣīr* out of it;" *Nihāya*, 53, 55.

[428] Brine (*maraqa*) in which *ṣīr* was processed appears in the cookery books as an ingredient of the sauce for some *ṣīr* preparations; *Kanz*, 101, n. 260; *Wuṣla*, 694.

which is taken from *ṣīr*."[429] In theory, *mulūḥa* could also be a kind of Arabic-Islamic equivalent of *garum*, the sauce which the Romans drained from the salt-fermented fish mush. *Garum*, called also *liquamen*, was the Romans' great gastronomic passion, and their favorite, universal, all-dish seasoning which they valued enormously.[430] But, somewhat paradoxically, the fermented fish sauce which the Romans could not live without was the substance which any self-respecting Cairenes would never season their food with.

In the Arabic-Islamic historical records *mulūḥa* as a food item is rarely referred to. Few as they are, these references nevertheless prove suggestive. While instructing market inspectors that "the fish dealers are forbidden to take *mulūḥa* from the urn and put it on the weight together with its brine," Ibn Bassām made it clear that the term designated salted fish itself.[431] Whether *mulūḥa* was identical with *ṣīr*, or varied from it in details resulting from some differences in the production process, is, however, difficult to define. Whatever it was, *mulūḥa* seemed to invoke negative connotations. Presumably because of its relatively offensive smell and sight, possibly because of its association with the religiously motivated diet of the Copts,[432] it was ascribed to those who deserved particular contempt and repugnance. Such was the case of four men and a woman who were reportedly caught in a Cairene garden while disregarding the fast of Ramadan. To stress the particularly contemptible nature of their offense, it was said that the food they dared to eat on a Ramadan day was *mulūḥa*.[433]

Even more condemnable was the case of Sharaf ad-Dīn an-Nashw, the popularly hated inspector of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's private treasury and a convert from Christianity in whose pantries undisputable proof of guilt was said to have been found: 200 containers of *mulūḥa*, significant

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[429] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, X, 309; *murrī* in the meaning of salt-fish brine is also mentioned by Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 55. *Murrī*, in fact a sauce of fermented barley was, as a seasoning, comparable to *garum*, or sauce of fermented fish.

[430] So much so that when *liquamen* went bad, the prudent Roman citizens (the well-to-do ones, to be sure), instead of wasting it away, would rather kill the unbearable odor by fumigating the sauce with laurel and cypress. In more hopeless cases, Apicius suggested adding honey and fresh spikenard; Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, VII. On various aspects of *garum* see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 143–6; Kurlansky, *Salt*, 73–5; Sue Shephard, *Pickled, Potted, Canned: How the Art and Science of Food Preserving Changed the World* (New York: Simon & Shuster Paperbacks, 2006), 103; Reay Tannahill, *Food in History: New, Fully Revised and Updated Edition of the Classic Gastronomic Epic* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1989), 82–4; Bober, *Art*, 152–6.

[431] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 55.

[432] Wassef, *Pratiques*, 342–3.

[433] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 62.

reserve of pig's meat, and 4,000 jugs of wine, apart from a huge amount of expensive textiles and garments.[434] Such a collection would not make much sense to demonstrate its owner's dishonest amassing of fortune. If used to prove his insincere intention while converting to Islam, however, it was a perfect *corpus delicti*, particularly when coupled with three Turkish mamluks whom an-Nashw had allegedly castrated and who were also reported to have been found (one alive and two dead) in the pantries.

Unlike *ṣīr*, the name of which seems to have at some point disappeared from the local culinary terminology, *mulūḥa* survives until the present. The contemporary product, made in some parts of Egypt and the Sudan, is a salt-fermented fish, the salting process of which is carried out in two stages. First, freshly caught fish is placed in alternative layers with granular salt in a wicker bag to facilitate drainage of liquids. Then, after the liquid is separated, the dry fish is transferred to another container and again arranged in alternating layers with granular salt. *Mulūḥa* becomes ripe after ca. 120 days.[435] Contemporary *mulūḥa* may in fact be closely related to medieval *mulūḥa* or *ṣīr*, provided that medieval process of curing fish with salt on mats (as described by an-Nuwayrī and al-Maqrīzī) was meant to extract water and did not involve sun-fermenting of fish.

Another name of medieval salt-fermented fish product used in contemporary Egyptian vocabulary is *fisīkh*, well-known for its distinctive, sharp, penetrating odor and strong, salty, rather acidic taste. As in the case of *mulūḥa*, there are certain differences between the present-day method of processing *fisīkh* and the method of its production as described in historical sources. If we are to believe the eleventh/seventeenth-century author ash-Shirbīnī, the historical *fisīkh* was made of striped mullet and of *ṭūbār*, by pressing fish tightly together after each of them had been covered with salt. After the fish had macerated, the water was drained and the dry fish was again salted and pressed, probably by putting suitable weights on the top. Ash-Shirbīnī also described how *fisīkh* was eaten by "the villagers and other people": "they take a fish, split its belly, and a man or a woman takes it in his left hand, or in both hands, squeezes lemon on it and tears out bite after bite ... with each bite taking a morsel of bread ... His mouth and hands become dirty, and the smell disgusting."[436]

[434] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 482.
[435] See Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 95; also Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 342–3.
[436] Ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 375.

The processing of *fisīkh*, as described by ash-Shirbīnī, was based on two stages of salting interrupted by drainage of the fish's liquids. As such, the method seems to have been more similar to contemporary *mulūḥa* production than to contemporary *fisīkh* making. Today, as before, the most appreciated *fisīkh* in Egypt (though not by all Egyptians) is made of whole striped mullet (*būrī*), the best of which still comes from Damietta.[437] The process of preparation involves fermenting the fish in the sun for one or two days, then dry-salting it in barrels. The latter operation requires stuffing the gills and placing the fish in layers alternating with granular salt (that is the way the Roman *salsamentum* was also made)[438] and pressing down by placing weights on the top. After adding saturated brine, the fish is allowed to cure for a period ranging from one week to two months. Before consumption, the fish is gutted, cut into fillets, and seasoned with oil, lemon, chopped onions, and parsley.[439] The fundamental technological differences between the contemporary *fisīkh* processing and the method described by ash-Shirbīnī are that the historical *fisīkh*-making did not involve pre-fermenting the fish in the sun and that the contemporary method of production does not require the drainage of liquids.

The old subtle differences between *ṣīr*, *mulūḥa*, and *fisīkh* are difficult to define today. All that can be said in this regard is that the differences were related to the technological details applied in the methods of processing particular products and to the kind of fish. *Ṣīr/mulūḥa* was made in Cairo of little "sardines" caught in the Nile, while *fisīkh*, made of striped mullet or *ṭūbār*, which were caught in the salt lakes on the Mediterranean coast, was brought to Cairo from Tinnīs or Damietta.[440]

Another mysterious name related to salt-fermented fish is *ṭirrīkh*. According to A.J. Arberry, in Arabic the name *ṭirrīkh* was applied to a fish caught in Lake Van in Armenia.[441] Indeed, a number of medieval Arab authors mentioned *ṭirrīkh* in this geographic context.[442] Nawal Nasrallah

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437 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 108; Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 342; Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 89.

438 Robert I. Curtis, "Sources for Production and Trade of Greek and Roman Processed Fish," in *The workshop sponsored by the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Black Sea Studies*, http://www.pontos.dk/publications/books/bss-2–files/BSS2_03_curtis.pdf, 35.

439 Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 89–90; Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 342; Darby, *Food*, I, 372.

440 Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 103 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." Cf. ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33.

441 Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 76, n. 4.

442 See, for example, Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, I, 350; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, IV, 129; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, I, 250; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, I, 190.

confirms it was caught in Lake Van (Arjīsh) and maintains it was a span long fish which was "brought to Baghdad already salted and dried."[443] The author of the *Delectable War* suggests that *ṭirrīkh* was, like *fisīkh*, imported to Cairo from Tinnīs or Damietta, which of course does not exclude its possible Armenian origin. Judging from the recipes, *ṭirrīkh* could be whole, unscaled, ungutted, and, probably, a rather small fish. Due to the long-distance transport to which it was subjected, it also had to be particularly well preserved.[444] Apparently, a rather popular way of preparing *ṭirrīkh* was to fry them in sesame oil and, after cleaning the fish of bones, heads and tails, break eggs on them in order to make a rich omelette.[445]

Today, the name *ṭirrīkh* is still used in the Arab world, at least in the Gulf area. Its preparation, limited almost exclusively to house production, consists in washing fish, which are Indian oil sardines, draining them and mixing with salt, cumin, and red chillies (this ingredient, originating in South America, was not known in the eastern hemisphere of the Middle Ages). The mixture is then put into a container and kept in sunlight for about one week. Just before consumption, the *ṭirrīkh* is diluted with water and eaten with bread, spring onions, and radish leaves.[446] The way *ṭirrīkh* is prepared in the Gulf area differs from what is recommended in the medieval Arabic recipes. Nevertheless, one cannot exclude the possibility that the contemporary *ṭirrīkh* may bear some resemblance to the *ṭirrīkh* of the past.

Apart from the specialties already discussed, there were two other salted preparations made of edibles of aquatic animal origin that the people of Cairo consumed: one was *dillīnas*, the other one *baṭārikh*. Like *ṣīr* and *ṣaḥna*, both were known as, above all, the staple foods of the common people.[447] *Dillīnas*, a small crustacean of the mollusks family, was famous for having been forbidden, as a representative of Biblical fish with no scales,

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443 Nasrallah, *Annals*, 728.

444 Charles Perry maintains that *ṭirrīkh* was dried salted fish (Perry, "Familiar Foods," 281). In *EI2,* VIII, "Samak," F. Vire identifies *ṭirrīkh* with anchovy, while Mez, *Renesans islamu*, 404, with sturgeon.

445 Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 76, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 84; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 391.

446 Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 91–2.

447 Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 205–6; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 54; Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 28 (also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 367); al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 107 (fol. 26*l*), 197 (fol. 49*r*); al-Idrīsī, *Nuzha*, I, 37; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 126.

by the caliph al-Ḥākim.[448] All we know about the consumption of *dillīnas* is that they were salty, and were served with oil and lemon juice.[449]

As for *baṭārikh*, a traditional Mediterranean delicacy of cured fish roe, known today as *botargo* or *bottarga*, its production was concentrated on the sea coast of the northern Delta. From there the product was brought to Cairo[450] where it was sold by retailers who also had salty *fisīkh* on their offer.[451] There are not too many clues regarding the way *baṭārikh* was prepared in medieval Egypt. Nowadays, the preparation of Egyptian *baṭārikh*, which is made of striped mullet's (*būrī*) roe, involves washing it, salting, pressing in layers between wooden boards, and drying. Dried roe has a form of amber-colored rectangular bars, 10–15 cm long and 2–3 cm wide. Since the way the *baṭārikh* is prepared today does not differ much from the way the roe was prepared in ancient Egypt,[452] it is quite probable that *baṭārikh*-makers of the Middle Ages used similar technology.

At the same time, however, there are records which suggest that the term *baṭārikh* might designate not only *botargo*, but also a product more akin to caviar, viz. salted (but not pressed or dried) fish roe. One such piece of evidence was recorded in a Hebrew letter belonging to the set of Geniza documents. It indicates that roe could be preserved or kept in salted fish from which it was "not taken out."[453] Another record, which is included in a late medieval Arabic recipe for a fish dish called *samak mukaffan*, confirms the practice of keeping fish roe this way. In this recipe, the roe (*baṭārikh*) is taken out of the salted fish (*samak al-baṭārikh*) and put in a separate vessel.[454] However interesting these two records are, they are not clear enough to be used as the basis for making definite statements regarding the nature of medieval Egyptian *baṭārikh*.[455]

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448 Leviticus, 11:9–10; al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 257; al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ*, II, 77; De Smet, "Interdictions," 55–6.

449 Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 102 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." Cf. chapter on shellfish in Darby, *Food*, I, 415–16; section on crustaceans in Wassef, *Pratiques*, 344; ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 331–32, where *umm al-khulūl* is referred to.

450 Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 27.

451 Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 33. In the eighteenth-century Cairo a dealer of *botargo* had his shop located near Khān Hamzāwī; see al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, III, 490; cf Lane, *Lexicon*, I, 274, entry "Būrī".

452 Darby, *Food*, I, 372–3; Wissa-Wassef, *Pratiques*, 343–4. According to ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 375, roe was left in the air until it hardened and dried.

453 Goitein, *Daily Life*, 251.

454 *Kanz*, 94, n. 241.

455 Many thanks to prof. David Jacoby for turning my attention to the possibility that the Black Sea caviar, traded in the medieval Mediterranean, could also be sold in Egypt.

It is difficult to confirm whether either *dillīnas* or fish roe were consumed by the higher orders of the Cairene society in the Middle Ages. The medieval cookery books contain only one recipe for a dish which calls for *baṭārikh*. In this recipe, already mentioned above, the roe is taken out of the salted fish, and put in a vessel with oil. Then the fish itself, soaked for some time and then washed, is put in a vessel (probably over the *baṭārikh*) which is then placed in the *furn* oven. After the contents is well done, it is taken out and cooled down. Then the sauce of onions, spices, *ṭaḥīna*, and vinegar is cooked, cooled, and poured over the fish.[456] According to an eleventh/seventeenth-century source, *baṭārikh* was eaten with vinegar, oil and, possibly, also with chopped garlic and onions,[457] while today it is eaten by small fine slices with bread and a drop of lemon juice.[458]

5. Dairy Products[459]

In one of his first remarks referring to Egypt, Leo Africanus noted that its inhabitants "are good people, polite and very generous. They eat a lot of milk and *fromages frais*. But they also consume lots of sour milk and milk which they curd by themselves. They salt their *fromages* enormously. So much so that a foreigner who is not accustomed to their food is not able to enjoy what they savor. To almost all their soups they add sour milk."[460] The comment, valid as it probably was for the Egyptian countryside, was only partly applicable to Cairo. As far as the consumption of dairy products was concerned, Cairenes differed from villagers in two respects. First, although they indeed used sour milk in their cookery,[461] they were not so

For a detailed data on the Black Sea caviar see David Jacoby, "Caviar Trading in Byzantium," in *Mare et litora. Essays Presented to Sergei Karpov for his 60th Birthday*, ed. Rustam Shukurow (Moscow: Indrik 2009), 349–64.

456 *Kanz*, 94, n. 241 (recipe for *samak mukaffan*).

457 Ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 375.

458 Wassef, *Pratiques*, 343–4; Roden, *New Book*, 57.

459 For discussion on butter and clarified butter see below, chapter II.9.D. "Oils and fats," pp. 320–1.

460 L'Africain, *Description*, 490.

461 Ibn Riḍwān confirmed that Egyptians often ate "sour milk and its products;" Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 92. See also Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6. Interestingly, the remarks referring to the consumption of milk in Egypt may not have been valid for the Jewish community living there. The observation that "about dairy products other than cheese, the Geniza is virtually silent" made Goitein assume that "with the exception of cheese, dairy products played no significant role in the daily diet;" Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252.

fond of it as to add it "to almost all their soups." And, second, they could not eat fresh milk or fresh cheese too often.

Due to the Egyptian climate considerations, fresh milk could not stay fresh for long and its rapid transformation into sour curds was inevitable. But the curds, if not subjected to a further preserving process, did not keep for long either. Therefore, the Egyptians "salted their *fromages* enormously." Maybe that was why the Maghrebian/Andalusian *mujabbanāt*, or sweets made of cheese, remained unknown to the culinary culture of Egypt and the Near East in general. Apart from sweetened rice with milk, the only milky sweetmeat to be consumed in Cairo was fresh cream (*qishṭa*) topped with honey, syrup, or molasses.[462] Salted cheese prevailed not only in the Egyptian cheese selection but, also, predominated in the diet of many Egyptians—for an average Cairene it was an important menu item, while for the country people and the Cairene poor it was one of their staples.[463] This was true throughout the Middle Ages and remained so for long after the Middle Ages were over. In the tenth/sixteenth and eleven/seventeenth centuries a very greasy, very salty, very fermented, and extremely cheap cheese consumed in huge quantities by the peasants and the poor still caught attention of foreign travelers.[464]

Its perishable nature notwithstanding, *ḥalīb*, or fresh milk, was from time to time indispensable. It was used, above all, for the making of certain condiments as well as in dishes the preparation of which involved cooking rice in milk. Of the latter category, the most typical was probably a very simple but famous dish known as "rice with milk,"[465] as well as various versions of *rukhāmiyya*, or "marble dish." *Rukhāmiyya* was always based on rice cooked in milk but, depending on the recipe, it could be made with meat, or with chicken and almonds, or with sugar and tail fat,

[462] Expiratión Garcia Sánchez, "Dietetic Aspects of Food in al-Andalus," in Waines, *Patterns*, 286; for recipes for Andalusian-Maghrebian *mujabbanāt* see at-Tujībī, *Faḍālat al-Khiwān*, 82–6.

[463] The fact that the local chroniclers quite frequently included cheese in the lists of food prices that they periodically composed is a sufficient proof of the popularity of this product. See, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthah*, in Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 32; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 826, 842; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 218, 695–7; II, 159; V, 64–5, 270, 303, 332. See also below, references to particular kinds of cheese, such as buffalo cheese, fried cheese, or *ḥālūm*. For the discussion of the prices of cheese in the Mamluk epoch see Ashtor, "Prix," 65–6.

[464] See the remark by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, who defined cheese as one of the staple foods of the poor; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 197 (fol. 49*r*). For the later epochs see, for example, L'Africain, *Description*, 490; Brown, *Voyage*, 182, and n. 145; Coppin, *Voyages*, 122.

[465] See above, chapter II.1.C. "Rice," pp. 141–2, 144, and the references therein.

or simply seasoned with Ceylon cinnamon, ginger, and mastic.[466] Fresh milk was also indispensable in some kinds of *maʾmūniyya*, a sweet dish of rice,[467] and in *jawādhib*, or sweet puddings made from bread or bread crumbs steeped in milk and baked in the oven under roasting meat.[468]

The most unusual fresh milk preparations were, however, two fermented, sharp-tasting condiments called *kawāmikh*. Of these, *kāmakh aḥmar* was made of grains of rotted barley or wheat which, pounded and kneaded with salt and fresh milk, was left in the sun until browned. According to Charles Perry, the fermentation process, involving the action of the *Penicillium* molds, resulted in the aroma characteristic of blue cheese.[469] The preparation of the other condiment, called *kāmakh rījāl*, was more time-consuming. Basically, *kāmakh rījāl* was made of a mixture of yoghurt, fresh milk, and salt that, left on the rooftop for four summer months to age, developed a cheese-like aroma. The mixture was fed daily with fresh milk, so with time it thickened and became "like a very sharp, salty semi-liquid cheese, with a hint of rancidity from the oxidation of the butterfat."[470]

However indispensable the fresh milk was in some preparations, it was less universal, and less frequently called for, than sour milk or yoghurt. The two products, both known in Arabic as *laban*,[471] could be used as an

[466] For recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 52, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 46; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 331–2, 342; *Kanz*, 34, n. 64; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 9a, 10a; *Wuṣla*, 591. For dishes based on rice and milk see also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 142–3 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 261–3).

[467] *Maʾmūniyya* could be made with or without milk, and with or without chicken; for recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 425; *Kanz*, 37, n. 71; 271, n. 22; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 10b, 36b; *Wuṣla*, 630–1. For detailed discussion on the dish see Rodinson, "Ma'mūniyya," 183–97.

[468] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 411; *Wuṣla*, 633. For remarks on the dish see also above, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 197 and the references therein.

[469] See Perry, "Familiar Foods," 282; for recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 402; *Kanz*, 185, nn. 500, 501; 186, nn. 503, 504; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 24a. See also below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 340.

[470] See Perry, "Familiar Foods," 282; for recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 402; cf. recipe for *kāmakh rījāl* in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 79, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 89–90; and for *kāmakh Baghdādī* in *Wuṣla*, 696–7. See also below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 340.

[471] The difference between the two products is that yoghurt is produced by bacterial fermentation of milk, while sour milk is a general term for milk that has acquired a tart taste, either through bacterial fermentation or through the addition of an acid, which causes milk to coagulate and form a thicker consistency. *Laban* may also mean traditional yoghurt prepared by boiling milk for a few minutes, then adding a starter to it and mixing thoroughly. The inoculated milk is then distributed into earthenware containers and incubated for a few hours.

ingredient in sour meat stews, in a number of the so-called *ṣabāʾigh* and, occasionally, in fish sauces. *Ṣabāʾigh* were relishes made of vegetables such as eggplant, gourd, or Swiss chard that, cooked and dried, were put in yoghurt which had previously been mixed with garlic.[472] In a similar way yoghurt could be served with fried salted fish, mixed with garlic and sprinkled with nigella seeds and Chinese cinnamon.[473] A combination of yoghurt and garlic inevitably brings to mind an appetizer known in Greece as *tzatziki*, which is made of strained yoghurt mixed with finely diced cucumbers, onion, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, and a selection of herbs. Its Turkish version, made with similar ingredients, is called *cacik* and differs from *tzatziki* in that it is diluted with water. The Arabic-Islamic food culture of the Middle Ages was not unfamiliar with the dish. It was called *jājiq* and, similarly to contemporary versions, was made of strained yoghurt seasoned with a combination of flavorings which could include salt, fennel, mint, mastic, charlock, and olive oil. Depending on the recipe, it could be enriched with chopped cucumber or thick white cheese; garlic, however, was kept away from the dish.[474] *Jājiq* was mentioned in at least three late medieval Cairene sources. However, as two of them are cookery books, and the third is a fantasy story, none can be considered trustworthy enough as evidence confirming the consumption of the dish by Cairenes.[475]

As for meat stews, yoghurt was added to, above all, *maḍīra*, a dish basically made of fat meat, onions, leeks, and melted sheep's tail fat and

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[472] For remarks on *ṣabāʾigh* see also below, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 247–8, and the references therein.

[473] See the recipe in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 75, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 83; and *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 390; cf. comments and references above, chapter II.4. "Fish," p. 216.

[474] The remark refers to the "Cairene" recipes included in *Kanz*, 190–2, nn. 518, 519, 523; and in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 25a. Al-Warrāq's Iraqi recipe for *jājiq* calls for garlic; see his *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 96 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 199–200). Cf. also recipes for "*shīrāz bi-buqūl*," in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 78, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 88–9; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 398–9; and the recipe for "*ṣalṣ*" made of a combination of yoghurt and garlic in *Wuṣla*, 698.

[475] For the mention of *jājiq* in "a fantasy story" see al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 100 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." The only positive clue regarding the consumption of *jājiq* by the Cairenes may be a remark by Richard Pococke, who observed that "they also eat a sour milk turned with seeds" (*Description*, 183). As the remark was made in the eighteenth century, and it is not certain to whom exactly it refers to, it cannot, however, be applied to the Middle Ages or to the medieval Cairenes in an uncritical way.

seasoned with Chinese cinnamon and coriander.[476] It was also a crucial ingredient in *labaniyya*, or "yoghurt dish," which was made by adding an evaporated stew of meat, onions, eggplants, and mint to boiling yoghurt.[477] In a dish called *rukhāmiyya*, rice was generally cooked in fresh milk. In one of its versions, however, rice could be also cooked in yoghurt and served with pieces of fried meat put on the surface of rice.[478] In the recipe for chicken *laymūniyya* ("lemon dish"), curdled or strained yoghurt (*laban mujabban*), seasoned with fresh mint, was used to tone down the thick, sour-sweet combination of syrup, lemon juice, and almonds in which pieces of chicken were cooked.[479]

Although yoghurt is a form of preserved milk, it does not keep for long. The Near Eastern food culture applied two basic methods to store surplus milk longer. One way was to dry it in the sun. The other was to make a cheese. The effect of drying were loaves of the so-called *kishk*, a product basically made of a mixture of crushed wheat and yoghurt or of yoghurt alone that, broken and soaked in hot water, could be used as an ingredient in a variety of one-pot meat preparations.[480] Sour and devoid of moisture,

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[476] And, optionally with some other seasonings; for recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 49, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 41–2; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 321, 327; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 31b.

[477] *Labaniyya* was seasoned with salt, "spices," garlic, and Chinese cinnamon; for recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 50, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 42; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 322; *Kanz*, 37–8, n. 74; 41, n. 87; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 10b, 31a; *Wuṣla*, 584.

[478] For recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 331; *Kanz*, 37, n. 72; 268, n. 13; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 30a. See also recipes for dishes such as *ḥiṣrimiyya* (*Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 313–14); *buqūliyya* (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 50, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 42; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 321); *ʿukaika* (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 51, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 43–4; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 323); *fākhtiyya* (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 59, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 57; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 346); *būrān* (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 59–60, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 58; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 347); *shīrāziyya* (al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 60, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 58; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 347). For the dishes based on rice and yoghurt see also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 142–3 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 261–3).

[479] See the recipe for *laymūniyya* in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 362.

[480] The cookery books contain more than one recipe for the *kishk* dish (usually named *kishkiyya* or *kishk*). These recipes differ slightly from each other regarding the ingredients, the way of preparation, and the use of *kishk* itself. See al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 165 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 291–2); *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 322–4; *Kanz*, 30, n. 53; 31, n. 54; 45, n. 102; 52, n. 123; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 7a, 11b; *Wuṣla*, 593, 596 (meatless dish), and 631 (a sweetmeat). For the preparation and use of *kishk* in the seventeenth-century Egypt see ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 302–7. For data on *kishk* in

kishk preserved milk effectively for quite a long time. Both the Greek *trahanas*, which is made of cracked wheat and yoghurt, and the Turkish *tarhana* consisting of cracked wheat, yoghurt, and vegetables, are contemporary successors of the medieval *kishk*.[481]

Dried hard, durable, and nourishing, *kishk* was a perfect provision for a soldier and a traveler, as well as for a peasant in winter.[482] However useful, *kishk* as a dairy product was not sought after. Its was coarse, its taste was far from attractive, and it demanded cooking. Not surprisingly, Near Eastern food culture, like many other cultures of the world, preferred to preserve milk in the form of cheese. Although processing milk into cheese is an ancient invention, the inhabitants of Pharaonic Egypt may not have known the product. As for later epochs, the sources dating back to Hellenistic period include a lot of references to cheese, but they generally do not mention the kind of cheese they refer to.[483] All in all, the beginnings of Egyptian cheese making remain rather unclear.

In the Middle Ages, cheeses consumed by Egyptians were—to use the systematization introduced by one local philosopher-dietician—of three kinds. There was "a moist fresh cheese which was consumed on the same day or close to it; there was an old dry cheese; and there was a medium one between them."[484] The first two categories are relatively easy to decipher. One of them must have included the so-called fresh cheese, or soft-curd unripened cheese made by souring the milk. Such cheese could be salted or unsalted, was perishable and locally produced. The other category included matured, long-lasting cheeses ripened by the use of enzymes from rennet or from microorganisms.[485] At least some, if not all

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the nineteenth-century Egypt see Lane, *Manners*, 566 n. 33. For contemporary production and use in the Arab world, see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 60–61; and Abdalla, *Kultura*, 109–14. For discussion on *kishk* in Turkish culture see Şavkay, *Timeless Tastes*, 76. For a detailed discussion of linguistic and ethno-culinary aspects of *kishk* see Françoise Aubaile-Sallenave, "*Al-Kishk*: the Past and Present of a Complex Culinary Practice," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 105–39.

[481] So is the Cypriot specialty which is additionally flavored with bay leaf, wild thyme, and fennel seeds. All are consumed as soup by adding them to stock or water; cf. Shephard, *Pickled*, 54–5.

[482] *Kishk* was a part of the Mamluk soldier's provision; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 149.

[483] Interestingly, no word designating cheese and dating back to the Pharaonic Period has been as yet identified with certainty. The only relatively precise reference from the Hellenistic epoch is that by Athenaeus, who mentioned fresh cheese being served at Naucratis. See Darby, *Food*, II, 772–3; Lewis, *Life*, 68; Bagnall, *Egypt*, 28.

[484] Al-Isrā'ilī, *Aghdhiya*, 565.

[485] It seems that the natural rennet (*infaḥa*, *minfaḥa*, *manāfiḥ*), or coagulating enzymes produced in the stomachs of suckling lambs, calves or goats, was available at the cheese

of these cheeses were imported. The question of "a medium one between them" is more complicated, as the description could refer to a variety of cheeses. First, the description could refer to various kinds of fresh curd, cream, or yoghurt cheeses which were preserved by salting, drying, renneting, macerating, etc. Second, it could refer to a cheese the coagulation of which was induced by evaporating the boiling milk to such a degree that its "wateriness was gone."[486] Third, it could refer to a cheese coagulated by adding to milk certain vegetable juices, such as cooked tamarind, verjuice, sour pomegranate juice, or the juice of citron.[487] The effect of applying this technology must have been comparable to Indian paneer, or a cheese which is coagulated by adding souring agent to boiling milk.

While working on his *Delectable War*, Aḥmad al-Ḥajjār collected as many as thirty names of cheeses. The list includes items such as *al-Muqaddasī* ("Palestinian, from Jerusalem") cheese; *al-ʿushbī* ("herbal") cheese, dripping with "tails of its oil;" *al-Karkarī* ("from Karkar," an ancient town in northwestern Syria) cheese; and tall *aṣ-Ṣarkhadī* ("from Ṣarkhad," a fortified post in southern Syria) cheese; *as-Sinnārī* ("from Sinnār," a town southeast of Khartoum) cheese, the fat of which was almost visible through its skin;[488] moldy (*ʿafin*) *al-qarīsh* cheese; *al-akhḍar* ("green") cheese; *al-kūtarī* cheese; *al-muzaʿtar* ("thymed") cheese; *al-ḥabābīṣ* cheese; *al-jartān* cheese; *al-ḥālūm* cheese; *at-Turkumānī aḍ-ḍaʾnī* ("Turcoman made of sheep milk") cheese; *al-aqfāṣī* cheese;[489] *al-ḥarīf* ("pungent") cheese; *al-jāmūsī* ("made of buffalo milk") cheese; *ar-rīfī* ("country") cheese; *al-ghanamī* ("made of goat milk") cheese; *al-maṣlūq* cheese; *jubn ash-sharāʾiḥ* ("the sliced cheese"), the whiteness of which came in sight from below the redness; *al-Farshūṭī*

maker's, who sold it separately; see Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 428, n. 66. For the ways of extracting the enzymes see, for example, Abdalla, *Kultura*, 204; Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 64–5, 72–73. The question of rennet seems to have raised some disputes among the Islamic scholars. Ibn al-Ḥājj reports of some learned *shaykh* who considered rennet to be impure and refused to eat cheese for that reason. According to Malik, however, there was no impurity in rennet and Ibn al-Ḥājj himself, as the follower of the Malikī school, did not share the *shaykh*'s problems with cheese; *Madkhal*, IV, 193. For an exhaustive discussion on rennet in the context of Islamic law see Michael Cook, "Magian Cheese: An Archaic Problem in Islamic Law," *BSOAS* 47/3 (1984): 449–67.

486 Al-Isrāʾilī, *Aghdhiya*, 567.

487 Ibid., 567.

488 *Al-jubn as-Sinnārī* is mentioned in Ibn Bassām's *ḥisba* manual, where it is suggested that the bazaar swindlers sprayed this cheese with olive oil or sesame oil, apparently in order to improve the cheese's appearance; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 29.

489 Actually, "*al-aqfāṣī*" may be a misspelled form of "*al-Aqfahsī*," a kind of cheese mentioned by Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 42–3, as a specifically Egyptian product which was exported to Syria.

("from Farshūṭ," a town in Upper Egypt) cheese; *al-maqlī* ("fried") cheese; *al-mashwī* ("roasted") cheese; *al-qābāt* cheese; and *aṣ-Ṣiqqilī* ("Sicilian") cheese. Interestingly, a few popular names are missing from this otherwise exhaustive list. Overlooked or intentionally omitted are *al-Khaysī* ("from Khays") cheese, *raṭib* ("moist," that is *fromage frais*) cheese, and *mishsh*.[490]

What is important, al-Ḥajjār composed his list for literary rather than documentary purposes and, most likely, based it on diverse sources, both written and oral. As such, the list seems to reflect the terminology used in the Arabic language of the ninth/fifteenth-century Near East rather than the actual offer of the Cairene market. Nevertheless, many of al-Ḥajjār's cheeses could doubtlessly be found in the shops of the city's cheese dealers. However, because in the case of consumable goods of the past a given name may not always be ascribed to the product, only a partial identification of Cairene cheeses is possible.

The cheeses available in Cairo were both domestically produced and imported. The bulk of the imported products and a certain part of the domestic production were distributed through the agency of Dār al-Jubn. Dār al-Jubn, or the Fusṭāṭi "Cheese House," was the main cheese warehouse and bazaar where importers, producers, agents, wholesalers, and retailers did their businesses.[491] The corresponding institution for Cairo was, most probably, Wikālat al-Jubn or "Cheese Agency."[492] Apart from that place, Cairenes could buy cheeses either from *labbān* or "sour milk dealer"[493] who, most probably, was also a manufacturer of the yoghurt cheese, or from *sammān*, nominally "clarified butter dealer" who, among many other things he offered, sold also cheese which was stored in oil-filled jars.[494] Cheeses from Syria were sold by cheese dealers (*jabbānūn*) who had their shops just outside the gate of Bāb Zuwayla.[495]

Imported cheeses were brought to Egypt from Europe as well as from the Levant.[496] The European kinds included Cretan and, above all, Sicilian cheeses, which constituted the bulk of cheese import from the northern Mediterranean. All of them had to be durable enough to survive the

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[490] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 101 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

[491] Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 111; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 104.

[492] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 124.

[493] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 193; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252.

[494] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 58 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 78–9).

[495] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100.

[496] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252; idem, *Economic Foundations*, 46, 124.

sea journey and then the Alexandria-Cairo route.[497] According to David Jacoby, the only kinds of Cretan cheeses suitable for export were ripened and hard cheeses made from the curd of soured milk pressed together to form a solid mass. For better preservation, such cheeses were either rubbed with dry salt or soaked in brine for some time, after which they were left to dry in a shady place. A late sixteenth-century Jewish source from Italy refers to this kind of cheese as *grana*.[498] Apart from that, not much is known about the kinds of cheeses which were imported from Crete. A fifteenth-century European visitor to Egypt defined them vaguely as "white,"[499] while the author of an eleventh- or twelfth-century Jewish letter written in Alexandria mentioned a "mixed" (*makhlūṭ*) cheese from Crete.[500] Neither of the designations is informative enough to deduce what kind of cheese is referred to.

As for Sicilian cheeses, they must have been very much like Cretan ones. Formed in molds of many different sizes and weights they were most probably dry and hard ripened cheeses. Each of the molds imported by the Jewish merchants for the Jewish community in Egypt bore an appropriate stamp.[501] Unlike the locally produced kinds, Cretan and Sicilian cheeses must have been costly and accessible only to the better-off Cairenes. They were probably eaten with bread, as an appetizer or a side dish. But Sicilian cheese could also be used in cooking. In a recipe for dietetic "dishes of dried pulses" it is thrown, together with cumin and cinnamon, on the surface of lentils, chickpeas, broad beans, or other pulses which, cooked into a thick consistency, were mixed with garlic, onions, fat, and green coriander.[502] As a sophisticated Cairene version of the recipe for *isfīdhabāj* indicates, there was also a cheese called *Rūmī*, the name which suggests it was brought from ar-Rūm, or Byzantium. Indeed, Egypt imported cheeses

497 Jewish sources from al-Fusṭāṭ refer to some thirteenth- and to many pre-thirteenth-century shipments of Sicilian cheese; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 251–2; idem, *Economic Foundations*, 46, 124; Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 66, confirms the presence of Sicilian cheese in the markets of the fifteenth-century Egypt.

498 See David Jacoby, "Cretan Cheese: A Neglected Aspect of Venetian Medieval Trade," in *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, ed. Ellen E. Kittel and Thomas F. Madden (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 50–1, 58–9. Many thanks to prof. David Jacoby for turning my attention to the Venetian context of the Mediterranean cheese trade.

499 Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 135.

500 Goitein suggests it was "most probably mixed with herbs;" see *Economic Foundations*, 428–9, n. 66.

501 Goitein, *Daily Life*, 251–2; 444, nn. 184, 188.

502 *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 449; on meatless dishes see below, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 261–3.

from ar-Rūm, but the name *Rūmī* could as well refer to some kind of the most ancient (and most durable) Roman cheeses, such as, say, *pecorino romano*.[503] Apart from the above-mentioned recipe for *isfīdhabāj*, the term *al-jubn ar-Rūmī* was rarely referred to in the culinary literature, if at all. The same is true, in fact, of other kinds of written sources, which means that there are few historical clues to the characteristics of this cheese. Nevertheless, it inevitably brings to mind hard, dry, sharp, climate-proof, yellowish *gibna Rūmī* of today.

Actually, the *Rūmī* cheese was not *de rigeur* in *isfīdhabāj*, or "white dish," as the Persian name indicates.[504] Of many different recipes for the stew, some of which do not mention cheese at all, one calls for undefined cheese, and another for *al-jubn ash-Shāmī*, or Syrian cheese.[505] Syrian cheese seems to have been more popular in Cairo than the European cheeses. Available from the little shops neighboring on the gate of Bāb Zuwayla,[506] it could be added to omelettes and scrambled eggs,[507] to *zaʿtar*, a condiment made of thyme, salt, olive oil, and/or yoghurt,[508] or to a rice and meat stew called *narjasiyya*, cooked with carrots and flavored with pepper, coriander, and cumin.[509] Actually, it is not clear which kinds of cheese were imported to Cairo from Syria. It is very probable, however, that they had something in common with traditional sheep/goat Levantine-Syrian preserved cheeses of today, such as *labneh*, a dried fat cheese made of strained yoghurt formed into balls and stored in olive oil, or *shanklīsh*, a ripened, moldy cheese in form of little dry balls made of defatted yoghurt coagulum and stored covered in ground thyme, or *shalāl*, a salty white cheese made up of thin strands woven together and stored in salty brine.[510]

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503 According to Perry, *Rūmī* cheese was "presumably Byzantine but possibly Sicilian;" see "Familiar Foods," 341, n. 6.

504 See Rodinson, "Venice," 211; Charles Perry, "*Isfīdhabāj*, *Blancmanger* and no Almonds," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arabic Cookery*, 263–6.

505 Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 159 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 282); *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 341; *Kanz*, 42–3, n. 92.

506 Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100.

507 See *Kanz*, 79, n. 198; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 19a.

508 See *Kanz*, 195, n. 533; 277, n. A43. Today sumac and sesame seeds are also often added to *zaʿtar*.

509 Ibid., 43, n. 95. Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 11a.

510 For detailed characteristics of contemporary *labneh* and *shanklīsh* see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 58, 71; for *shalāl*-type cheese see Abdalla, *Kultura*, 204.

According to S.D. Goitein, Egypt had to import cheeses because the domestic production was insufficient.[511] But the insufficiency of domestic cheese production was limited to the periods of drought or pestilence and, as such, could hardly have been a reason for importing overseas cheeses. Moreover, those who particularly suffered from the possible periodical insufficiency of Egyptian cheese could not afford substituting it with the imported product anyway. Therefore, it seems that Egyptian market's demand for European and Levantine cheeses was caused not so much by the shortage of the domestic product, but by the fact that the Cretan, Sicilian, or Syrian offer was simply different in flavor, composition, and texture from the local kinds. In other words, as quite different kinds of product, the imported and the domestic cheeses satisfied different tastes and met different needs. Since by its nature traditionally made cheeses are very local specialties, it is very tempting to conclude that the imported cheeses filled the gap which the Egyptian producers, with their particular ingredients and particular technologies, could not manage to fill.

Generally, Egyptian cheeses were salted, soft and semi-soft *fromage*-type cheeses, preferably made of buffalo or cow milk, or a mixture of the two. The share of the goat and sheep milk in the Egyptian cheese production seems to have been lower than that in the northern Mediterranean and Levantine countries. The main center of the Egyptian cheesemaking industry was the *département* of Damietta, or the northeastern part of the Gharbiyya province.[512] It was from there that at least part of the deliveries of *al-jubn al-jāmūsī*, or popular and appreciated buffalo cheese, was brought to Cairo.[513] The province was famous not only for water buffalos. Adding to its reputation were its *Khaysiyya* cows, which were the most highly prized Egyptian milk-cows, and its *Khaysī* cheese, which was

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[511] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 124.

[512] Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 26; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 124.

[513] The characteristics of the medieval Egyptian buffalo cheese is difficult to define today; it could have had something in common with the mozzarella-type of cheese, the most popular of cheeses made of buffalo milk today. For the "Cairene" references to *jāmūs*'s milk, and to cheese made of it see, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, 295 (Al-Maktaba ash-Shāmila CD edition) where, in the annal for 829/1425–6, it is recorded that in the month of Muḥarram "the death toll of the river-buffalos increased, which was the reason why milk and cheeses became scarce." Also ibid., III/1, 322, where "fresh buffalo cheese" is mentioned; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Ḥawādith*, I, 33 (Al-Maktaba ash-Shāmila CD edition), where "white buffalo cheese" is mentioned; idem, *Nujūm*, III, 17, where Ibn Ṭulūn is said to have been fond of buffalo milk; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 218 and an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, X, 124–5, where it is observed that "milk of buffalo is the most delicious of all kinds of milk, and also the fattest;" also al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 99, 101 of the text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

a cheese made of these cows' milk. According to Yāqūt, the name *al-baqar al-Khaysiyya*, or the *Khaysiyya* cows, derived from Khays, a rural district in the western part of Egypt.[514]

One of the earliest records referring to the consumption of this cheese in the al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo area dates back to the early fifth/eleventh century, when it was mentioned in the context of *khayyāsūn*, or "those who carry *al-Khaysī* cheese to Miṣr [al-Fusṭāṭ] and who are Christians."[515] Another interesting reference to *al-Khaysī* cheese dates back to the ninth/fifteenth century and can be found the *ḥisba* manual written by Ibn Bassām. In fact, the context in which the cheese is mentioned is a rather weird one: Ibn Bassām warns that the bazaar swindlers should "not wash *al-Khaysī* cheese in the washrooms of the baths."[516] It is difficult to ascertain why *al-Khaysī* cheese was washed at all—whether because the manufacturing process required such a procedure,[517] because soaking was to remove the surplus of salt from the heavily salted cheese, or because the cheese's outward layer, produced by the heavily salted brine in which it was preserved, had to be rinsed. Whatever its reason, the procedure of washing as applied to *al-Khaysī* cheese implies that it could be neither a hard and dry type of cheese nor a fresh cheese of the *fromage* type.

One clue as to the nature of *al-Khaysī* cheese may be provided by the so-called *gibna bēḍa*, or *gibna Dumyāṭī*, the contemporary white, soft, salty cheese produced in the same Damietta district. The contemporary *Dumyāṭī* cheese producers are said to boast about the antique roots of the product, which is apparently believed to have originated to the early

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[514] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, II, 411–12; on *Khaysiyya* cows see also Ibn al-Kindī, *Faḍāʾil*, 50; al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 97; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 91 (fol. 22*l*); Ibn Ẓahīra, *Faḍāʾil*, 134–5; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 111. And Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 44, where *abqār al-Bakhātī* and *al-Bajāwiyya* are also mentioned. Cf. Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 428, n. 66.

[515] Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 97.

[516] Ibn Bassām, in *Nihāya*, 29, spelled the term with "ḥ" instead of "kh;" in such a form it also appears in al-Muqaddasī's *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, where "*ḥaysuhum*," or "*ḥays* of theirs" is mentioned. Al-Muqaddasī mentions "*ḥays*" as one of the food items typical for the country. The context does not make it clear, however, whether the term is a misspelled (undotted) form of "Khays" and refers to *Khaysī* cheese, or a correct form of "*ḥays*" and designates sweet balls made of finely pounded dry bread mixed with date paste, nuts and sesame oil. For some remarks on *ḥays* see also above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," p. 162, and below, chapter II.7. "Fruits," p. 284.

[517] As is, for example, the case with dry, ripened, salty *shanklīsh* cheese, the manufacturing process of which requires washing off the vegetative growth after ripening for one month; see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 71–2. Besides, in some cases washing makes the cheese softer, more elastic, and receptive to shaping. I am grateful to prof. Michael Abdalla for the latter remark.

Hellenistic epoch.[518] Due to the absence of the source information, it is impossible to investigate the ancient past of the *Dumyāṭī* cheese. Assuming, however, that soft, white, salty cheese had indeed been manufactured in the Damietta area as early as in the Hellenistic period, it seems probable that a similar kind of cheese was also produced there in the Middle Ages. Although the connection is of a somewhat mythical nature, it nevertheless allows one to consider the contemporary *Dumyāṭī* cheese as the possible successor of medieval *al-Khaysī* cheese.

Dumyāṭī cheese is made of a mixture of buffalo and cow milk which, salted and heated, is coagulated by the addition of rennet. The coagulum is ladled out into wooden molds which, during the next three days, are frequently turned in order to drain the whey. For fresh consumption, the molds are removed and the cheese is cut into square pieces. Batches of cheese destined for storage are pickled by storing them in salted whey for four to eight months. Then the cheese is cut into pieces, packed into suitable containers, and completely covered with brine. As it ripens in the brine, it acquires a firmer texture and an acidic taste.[519] The necessity to wash out the layer produced by the preserving brine may be the reason why the Cairene cheese dealers washed, or soaked, *al-Khaysī* cheese in "the washrooms of the baths."

When Jūdar, an impoverished Cairene fisherman of one of the *Arabian Nights*' stories, was once asked about what he would like to eat most of all, he did not have to consider the answer for too long. As his dreams were simple, the first thing which came to his mind was bread with cheese. Jūdar's mother, when asked the same question, replied in an identical way.[520] Being poor, they did not mean any of the imported varieties. What they had in mind could be some kind of salty Egyptian *fromage*. Most probably, however, they dreamt about fried cheese, because fried cheese, served by the street vendors with fresh, warm bread, was one of the Cairenes' most popular foods.[521] In fact, *jubn maqlī*, or fried cheese, a dish which consisted of cheese cooked in oil was, as Muṣṭafā ʿAlī noticed,

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[518] See Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 62, where it is said that *gibneh beydah*, or *gibneh Domiati*, "is believed to have originated in Egypt around 332 B.C."

[519] *Dumyāṭī* cheese may be also made from goat or sheep milk; see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 62–4.

[520] "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," Nights 612 and 615.

[521] See the references to *jubn maqlī* in, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 826, 842; III/3, 1124; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 270, 282; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 207; L'Africain, *Description*, 504, 517.

"their food day and night."[522] Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, a cultured Ottoman official, had no understanding for this atypical predilection. He was clearly irritated by the fact that "they stretched out their hands for it in blind greed," and he considered the dish "heavy, indigestible food" which "caused a weakening of vision and led to blindness."[523]

Contrary to the appearances, fried cheese was not exclusively the food of the poor. In the Ayyubid times, it was included, together with many refined food items, in the contents of the so-called *raghīf aṣ-ṣīniyya*, an elite dish which was, in fact, a kind of temperature-proof picnic basket made of dough.[524] During the Mamluk epoch, at least some of the sultans relished fried cheese. An-Nāṣir Muḥammad was so fond of the specialty that he ordered it to be served to him every night, together with some other of his favorite snacks.[525] Moreover, he apparently could not live without it: when he went to Hijaz for a pilgrimage, he took cheese fryers with him.[526] An-Nāṣir Muḥammad made a perfect match with Ṭughāy Khātūn, his beloved wife. When she decided to go for a pilgrimage, a number of milk cows had to go with her all the way to Hijaz and back, as she could not do without fresh yoghurt and cheese. Karīm ad-Dīn al-Kabīr, the inspector of the sultan's private treasury (*nāẓir al-khāṣṣ*) who was entrusted with organizing the *ḥajj* expedition and who took personal care of the sultan's wife, fried cheese for her twice a day.[527]

In the Circassian epoch, fried cheese was still in vogue. Moreover, in the somewhat impoverished cuisine of the declining Mamluk state it apparently gained the status of *de luxe* food (*maʾākil fākhira*). Ibn Iyās recorded that it was served at festive parties held by the members of state elites during the reign of al-Ashraf Qāytbāy[528] and that it was eaten by

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[522] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 44. Although the cheese should have been fried in sesame oil, the cheese fryers apparently sometimes used cheaper linseed oil; see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 207; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 282.

[523] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 44. Interestingly, Leo Africanus and Edward Brown were also convinced that cheese was detrimental for human health. Africanus "knew," for example, that salted cheese (as well as buffalo meat) was, according to the doctors, a reason of some diseases; L'Africain, *Description*, 493. Brown suggested an association between the frequent occurrence of leprosy among the local population and the greasy, salty and fermented cheese, which the Egyptians consumed in significant quantities; Brown, *Voyage*, 182.

[524] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 193 (fol. 48*r*).

[525] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210; cf. Dreher, "Regard," 64.

[526] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 196; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 58.

[527] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 425.

[528] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, III, 186; cf. Dreher, "Regard," 70.

sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī and his officers during various festive banquets and picnics.[529] Khayr Bak, the first Ottoman viceroy in Egypt and the last Mamluk governor to reside in the Citadel of Cairo, must have appreciated fried cheese, too, as he continued the tradition of taking it for picnics.[530] It is in fact not impossible that the Turks who in the mid-eleventh/seventeenth century spent their days "drinking coffee and eating cheese on the river boats," ate fried cheese, too.[531]

Fried cheese, one of the most characteristic food items of medieval Cairo, survived the Ottoman occupation, but with time its popularity clearly decreased. By the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century al-Jabartī could still comment on a certain cheese fryer,[532] but this was probably the only (and the last post-tenth/sixteenth-century) record referring to fried cheese in Cairo. Today fried cheese (in fact deep-fried or broiled) is eaten in Syria, Lebanon, Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey, where it is usually served for breakfast.[533] In most cases, it is *halloumi*, a semi-soft, salty cheese made of a mixture of goat and sheep milk coagulated with the use of rennet. *Halloumi* is one of the few kinds of cheese that do not melt when heated.[534] Greeks prefer to use feta, a curd cheese made from sheep milk, or a mixture of sheep and goat milk, which can also be fried. Both the *halloumi*, apparently an original Cypriot invention, and feta, the traditional Greek cheese, were, most probably, unknown in medieval Cairo. But the local *al-Khaysī* cheese, of which Cairenes had an ample supply, was just as good: it was salty and feta-like, it did not melt when heated, and it could be consumed fried.[535] Actually, it seems that cheese fryers were selling *al-Khaysī* cheese in the streets of medieval Cairo. Interestingly, the cheese which was meant for frying had to be washed thoroughly before it was placed in the frying pan. Most probably, washing was meant to remove the surplus of salt in which cheese was preserved.[536]

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[529] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 276, 293, 379.

[530] Ibid., V, 357; cf. Dreher, "Regard," 81.

[531] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 189.

[532] Al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, IV, 280.

[533] For the recipe see Roden, *New Book*, 58.

[534] Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 70–1. The resistance to melting comes from the fresh curd being heated before it is shaped and placed in brine.

[535] See the recipe for "oven bread with *Khaysī* cheese" in *Wuṣla*, 659, which is, in fact, the only clue regarding the kind of cheese which was possibly used for frying.

[536] The procedure of washing, as described by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 207, may have had something in common with the practice of washing of *al-Khaysī* cheese "in the washrooms of the baths," as mentioned by Ibn Bassām; see above, pp. 236–7. Cf. at-Tujībī, *Faḍālat al-Khiwān*, 216, where salt is washed off the cheese before it is fried.

As for the term *halloumi*, designating a kind of cheese that is eaten in contemporary eastern and northeastern Mediterranean, it may be quite misleading if used in reference to the historical context. In its Arabic spelling, it actually does not differ from medieval *ḥālūm*. The problem is, however, that the medieval *ḥālūm* seems to have designated a quite different product. The earliest remark referring to it is probably that made by al-Muqaddasī who, while listing certain features of the Egyptians, mentioned that "*ḥālūm* is their cheese."[537] Indeed, in the tenth/sixteenth century Ibn Iyās confirmed that *ḥālūm* was a specifically Egyptian cheese and added that it was exported to Syria.[538] These remarks are rather vague and do not contain any clues regarding the nature of the cheese. The same refers to Ibn Iyās's records including the price lists for the years 779/1377, 807/1405, and 924/1518, where *ḥālūm* cheese is mentioned as one of the apparently basic food articles.[539] Finally, from Jean Coppin's account we can learn that the cheese called "Gibethalum" (Eg. *gibnat ḥālūm*), which the eleventh/seventeenth-century Egyptians of the lowest class fed themselves with, was a salted cheese.[540] In the thirteenth/nineteenth century, *ḥālūm* was defined by Edward Lane as "a sort of *aqiṭ* [a preparation of dried curd] or milk that is made thick so that it becomes like fresh cheese."[541] The definition, apparently based on al-Fīrūzābādī's Qāmūs (the eighth/fourteenth century), was also used by Butrus al-Bustānī, whose dictionary dates back to the same period as Lane's; however, al-Bustānī added that "then [the cheese] dries."[542] Interestingly, this description, while not fitting the contemporary product bearing that name, agrees perfectly with the characteristics of medieval *ḥālūm* as described in a number of recipes preserved in *Kanz*.

According to these recipes, *ḥālūm* was unfermented, unrenneted, nonripening soft cheese made by evaporating water from fresh milk which had been seasoned with thyme and salt. In other words, the milk was cooked until its "wateriness was gone" so that only "milkiness and fatness" remained.[543] When the milkiness and fatness was cooled down, it

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537 Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 206; also 204; cf. Ashtor, "Diet," 136.

538 Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, I/1, 42–3.

539 Ibid., I/2, 218, 695–7; V, 270; also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/3, 1133.

540 Coppin, *Voyages*, 122.

541 "But it is not." See Lane, *Lexicon*, I, 633; see also Darby, *Food*, II, 775, where the Bohairic Coptic meaning of *halom* is explained.

542 Al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, I, 443.

543 The expressions used by al-Isrā'ilī, *Aghdhiya*, 567. Interestingly, the traditional, home-made Cypriot country *halloumi*—which is a product different from industrial *halloumi*—is

became a cheese, which had a form of fatty, grainy, yellowish substance, and which could be further prepared for consumption in a variety of ways. The simplest way involved cutting it up into small pieces and keeping for three days in a jar filled with salted and thymed sheep's milk. Other recipes were more refined. In one of them, for example, cheese was to be put in an earthenware urn (*maṭar*) in layers alternating with layers of peeled bitter orange, *kubbād* oranges, citrons, lemons, and fresh thyme. The contents of the urn, composed this way, was then covered with boiling milk, pressed, and left for some time to ripen. One could also prepare *ḥālūm* by covering it, cut it into pieces, with a marinade of garlic crushed with salt and oil, green lemon juice, wine vinegar, ground toasted hazelnuts, ginger, milled coriander, caraway, mint, and a branch of rue. In yet another recipe *ḥālūm* was macerated in an exceedingly rich sauce composed of minced mint, rue, thyme, ground mustard seeds, vinegar, pepper, ginger, ground dried rosebuds, garlic crushed with olive oil, salt, lemon juice, toasted walnuts, toasted coriander and caraway, and *ṭaḥīna*.[544]

Unlike the *ḥālūm*, no historical recipes for *qarīsh* cheese survived in medieval cookery books. As *qarīsh* is still manufactured in Egypt in a traditional way, the contemporary technology may offer some clues regarding the historical product. The same refers to *mishsh*, another popular Egyptian cheese with a long historical record. One of the first remarks referring to *jubn qarīsh*, or "*qarīsh* cheese," is included in the chronicle written by the Fatimid vizier Ibn al-Ma'mūn where, however, no clues regarding the characteristics of the cheese are provided.[545] Supposing, however, that the local tradition preserved the name together with the product and technology of production, we can assume that medieval *qarīsh* was a salted, soft, defatted white cheese made of buffalo or cow milk, or a mixture of the two. We can also assume that its production involved milking the buffalo or cow directly to a large, earthenware jar which was left undisturbed for some time until the fat formed a surface layer, leaving the defatted, sour milk underneath. After the cream layer had been skimmed, the curd was poured into a reed-type mat to drain. Then the mat was squeezed and

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still made this way in certain parts of Cyprus. Many thanks to Dr. Nicholas Coureas for providing this information.

[544] See the recipes in *Kanz*, 191, n. 520; 192, nn. 521, 522; 193, 525. For a more detailed presentation of the recipe n. 520 ("*ḥālūm* cheese in *ṣalṣ*") see below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 345.

[545] Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbar Miṣr*, 92.

hung to dry. After two or three days the cheese, cut into pieces and salted, was ready for consumption.[546]

Strangely enough, in his *Delectable War*, al-Ḥajjār defined *qarīsh* as moldy (*ʿafin*).[547] As this feature has nothing to do with contemporary soft, fresh cottage cheese, al-Ḥajjār's definition may mean that either he mistook *qarīsh* for some other kind of cheese, or that historical and contemporary *qarīsh* have little to do with each other. The third possibility is that he actually meant *mishsh*, the "blue *qarīsh* cheese which was kept for so long that it cut off the mice's tails with its burning sharpness and the power of its saltiness," as an eleventh/seventeenth-century author defined it.[548] *Mishsh* was, it seems, the staple fare of the Egyptian fellahs, who ate it with bread and green onions or leeks.[549] Very probably, it was also this cheese which the European travelers observed being consumed in huge quantities by the local population. Moreover, it cannot be excluded that it was also because of this cheese that some Egyptians carried with them a cheese knife.[550] Today *mishsh* is a traditional, soft, pickled, ripened cheese, often manufactured at home by country people. Of yellowish-brown color, sharp flavor, and high salt content, it is made of *qarīsh* cheese which, cut into cubes, is packed into an earthenware pot. The space between the pieces of cheese is filled either with salted milk or with salted buttermilk to which sesame seeds, fenugreek, pepper, anise seeds, caraway, cumin, fennel, cloves, nutmeg, thyme, or nigella seeds may be added. The jar, sealed with mud paste mixed with wheat chaff, is kept for about one year in a warm, sunny place to ripen.[551] As there are no reasonable grounds to doubt the direct connection between contemporary and historical Egyptian *mishsh*, we can assume, with some probability, that the product manufactured today by the Egyptian fellahs basically does not differ from that produced by their medieval ancestors.

Of the countless cheeses or cheese-like preparations mentioned in the medieval Arabic sources, one more product deserves attention. Although

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[546] Salted if prepared in the traditional way, unsalted if manufactured by big dairy plants; see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 65–6.

[547] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 101, 106 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." The cheese is also mentioned in ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 285.

[548] Ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 327; cf. entry "Al-Mishsh" in Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, 382. According to Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 428, n. 66, the medieval Egyptian *mishsh* was "a cheese made of buttermilk and curds by the *mashshāsh*."

[549] Ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 327; cf. entry "Al-Mishsh" in Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, 382.

[550] L'Africain, *Description*, 516.

[551] See Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 67–8.

its popularity in Cairo itself has not been confirmed, the possibility that it actually was consumed by the Cairenes should not be ruled out. The product was called *qanbarīs* and has been defined by Charles Perry as "thickened yoghurt" or "dried milk product used in cooking."[552] Actually, defining *qanbarīs* in more clear-cut terms is a thorny task, as the recipes we have at our disposal are not quite consistent. According to one of them, *qanbarīs* à la Damascene was made by thickening the buttermilk (*laban mukhīḍ*) by gentle heating (?). Cooled and put in jars, the resulting product could be stored and "used throughout the year."[553] According to another recipe, *qanbarīs* was made of yoghurt (*laban*) coagulated by mixing with boiled vinegar. The coagulum was subsequently left undisturbed until the next day, when one was supposed to find it "as dry as *qanbarīs*."[554] In the third recipe *qanbarīs* is described as a product made of fresh milk (*al-laban al-ḥalīb*) which was boiled, poured into an earthenware jar, cooled, and mixed with an appropriate quantity of yoghurt. Then the jar was covered and left overnight in a warm place. The resulting substance, shaped "like a round loaf," was strained in a cloth the next day, and thus "became *qanbarīs*." The product was then removed from the cloth and salted. It could be served seasoned with mace (*bisbāsa*) and spices and mixed with cucumber and eggplant.[555] *Qanbarīs*, when mixed with egg, lemon and almonds, could be also used as filling for a two-crust fried pie the shell of which was made of *sanbūsik* breads. Melted in green lemon juice and broth, it could also be sprinkled on a ready *narjāsiyya* dish.[556]

Which of the above-discussed versions of *qanbarīs* was made and eaten in Cairo is probably impossible to say. It may, however, be worth of note that the products have some common features with two contemporary

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[552] Perry, "Familiar Foods," 471; idem, "Medieval Arab Fish," 482; idem, "Thousand and One 'Fritters'," 492. According to Nasrallah, *Annals*, 589, *qanbarīs* was "sourish soft cheese made by draining yoghurt or buttermilk.

[553] *Kanz,* 188, n. 508. In fact, the recipe is rather unclear. The Arabic text reads: "*yuʾkhadh al-laban al-mukhīḍ fa-yuʿqad dūna ʿaqd al-aqiṭ.*" *Aqiṭ* was a dried curd product made of buttermilk which was cooked until evaporated, and then dried hard (drying might have been preceded by straining); cf. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, VII, 257; Lane, *Lexicon*, 70; according to *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, *aqiṭ* is a kind of cheese made from sour milk; see Butrus al-Bustānī, *Kitāb Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ. Qāmūs Muṭawwal li-l-Lugha al-ʿArabiyya* (Beirut, 1867–70), I, 30. Ṣee also the definition in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 585. This may suggest that to make *qanbarīs* the buttermilk should have been heated gently, just enough to coagulate the milk proteins, but without evaporating the whey. It also suggests that *qanbarīs* was not dried hard.

[554] *Kanz,* 190, n. 515.

[555] Ibid., 194, n. 531.

[556] See *Wuṣla*, 549, 576. *Qanbarīs* was also mentioned in *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 100 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación."

Levantine cheeses. One of them is *shanklīsh*, a ripened, moldy, dry cheese made of defatted yoghurt coagulum formed into little balls and stored covered in ground thyme. The other is *labneh* (*labna*), a fat cheese made of strained yoghurt that, formed into balls, is dried in the sun and then stored, covered with olive oil, either in glazed earthenware pots or in glass jars. Interestingly, in Lebanon, where it is made, a version of the product is called *labna qanbarīs*.[557] It cannot be excluded that the medieval *qanbarīs*, if available in Cairo at all, was brought to the city from the Levant and sold, together with other Syrian cheeses, in the cheese dealers' shops near Bāb Zuwayla.[558]

6. Vegetables and Legumes[559]

In 340s/950s or 350s/960s Abū Misk Kāfūr, an Abyssinian eunuch who went on to become the ruler of Egypt, asked a certain Ibn al-Kindī to write a book praising the excellent features (*faḍāʾil*) of his Egyptian dominion. Ibn al-Kindī did the job but, possibly due to the lack of good informers or to his selective sense of observation, failed to point to the fertility of the local soil. Moreover, his remarks seem to be more relevant to some steppe-style accidental agriculture than to the intensively and professionally cultivated fields of the Nile valley. All he managed to record regarding the vegetable crops of Egypt was lettuce (*khass*; *Lactuca sativa*), lupine (*turmus*; *Lupinus termis*), and grass pea (*jullabān*; *Lathyrus sativus* L.).[560]

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557 Or "anbaris" as it is spelled in *Food Biotechnology*, ed. Kalidas Shetty et al. (New York: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis, 2006), 1838.

558 Actually, *qanbarīs* might have been quite popular in medieval Syria: in his annal for 658/1259–60 al-ʿAynī, apparently quoting the Syrian chronicler Abū Shāma, mentioned the rise of prices which occurred that year in Damascus. Apart from bread, meat, cheese and grapes, the attached list of sample prices of the most basic food items included *qanbarīs*; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl az-Zamān*, ed. M.M. Amīn (Cairo: Al-Hayʾa al-Miṣriyya al-ʿĀmma li-l-Kitāb, 1987–89), I, 272.

559 "Vegetable" is a culinary, not a botanical term. All parts (such as roots, bulbs, stems, leaves, flowers, seeds, or botanical fruits) of herbaceous plants consumed by humans, whole or in part, can be considered vegetables. In general, vegetables are thought to be savory and not sweet, although there are many exceptions to this rule. Vegetables are usually eaten during the main part of a meal while culinary fruits are usually sweet and eaten in the form of desserts or juices. "Grain legumes," or "pulses," are terms reserved for crops harvested solely for the dry grain, which excludes green beans and green peas, considered to be vegetable crops.

560 Ibn al-Kindī, *Faḍāʾil*, 50. Grass pea, or *jullabān*, is sometimes translated as "vetch;" see, for example, Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 66, n. 80; Darby, *Food*, II, 692. In his *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, ash-Shirbīnī observed that the Egyptian peasants ate *jullabān* the way they ate

Needless to say, the country had much more to offer and both the ancient and medieval sources provide dozens of names of edible plants cultivated in the fertile Nile valley, the oases, and the Delta.

One of the earliest medieval records comprising a noteworthy collection of local vegetable names is a medical treatise by Ibn Riḍwān, a doctor from Fatimid Egypt. Presenting Ibn Riḍwān's theory of healthy lifestyle, the treatise, included numerous diet recommendations which changed according to actual environmental circumstances. Depending on the temperature and humidity, the reader was encouraged to consume, apart from lettuce, lupine, and grass pea, orache (*qaṭaf*; *Atriplex hortensis*), spinach (*isfānākh*; *Spinachia oleracea*), purslane (*rijla*, *baqla ḥamqāʾ*; *Portulaca oleracea* L.), chicory/endive (*hindabāʾ*; various chicories possible, *Cichorium endivia*), at least three varieties of cucumber (*khiyār*, *faqqūs*, *qiththāʾ*; species of *Cucumis*),[561] pumpkin, gourd, or squash (*qarʿ*, *yaqṭīn*, *dubbāʾ*; species of *Cucurbita*),[562] Swiss chard (*ṣilq*; *Beta vulgaris* var. *cicla*), asparagus (*hilyawn*; *Asparagus officinalis*), carrots (*jazar*; *Daucus carota*), turnip (*lift*; *Brassica rapa*), celery (*karfas*; *Apium graveolens*), garlic (*thūm*; *Allium sativum*), onion (*baṣal*; *Allium cepa*), leek (*kurrāth*; *Allium ampeloprasum var. porrum*), rue (*sadhāb*; *Ruta*), radish (*fujl*; *Raphanus sativus*), colocasia/taro (*qulqās*; *Colocasia antiquorum*), lentils (*ʿads*; *Lens culinaris*), and broad bean (*bāqillāʾ*, *fūl*; *Vicia faba*).[563]

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green broad beans, or perhaps they cooked it with lentils; ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, I, 343.

561 According to ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, "*faqqūs* is a little *qiththāʾ*, no longer than a small span; most of them are one finger-long. It is softer and sweeter than *qiththāʾ*, and, no doubt, it is a kind of it... As for *qathar* [misspelled *qathad*], it is *khiyār*;" al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 73–75 (fols. 18*r*–18*l*). According to *Chihabi's Dictionary of Agricultural and Allied Terminology*, ed. Ahmad Sh. Al-Khatib (Beirut: Libraire du Liban, 1978), *faqqūs* is a cucumber, Egyptian *qiththāʾ*; while *qiththāʾ* is *Cucumis chate*, the Egyptian or hairy cucumber; *qathad*, or *khiyār* is *Cucumis sativus*. According to Ibn Iyās (the ninth-tenth/fifteenth-sixteenth centuries), *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 42, *faqqūs* had disappeared from Egypt some time before he wrote his chronicle. To the list of cucumbers, Ibn Iyās adds also *khiyār ash-shanbar*, a vegetable which, apparently, was considered therapeutic; *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 43. Al-Baghdādī observes that *khiyār shanbar* "is a very common tree in Egypt, and it is a large tree resembling the Syrian carob (*kharrūb*) tree. Its flower is large, yellow and brilliant: when the fruit is set it hangs like a green cudgel;" al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 77–9 (fols. 19*r*–19*l*).

562 "As for Egyptian *yaqṭīn*"—al-Baghdādī observes—"which is commonly known as *dubbāʾ*, in Egypt it is long and has a shape of cucumber [*qiththāʾ*]. It reaches two cubits in length and a span in diameter;" al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 75–7 (fols. 18*l*–19*r*). *Yaqṭīn* was a name apparently applied to several species of the marrow family and, at the same time, it was a synonym for *qar'a*; Waines, "Muzawwar," 313.

563 Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 132–7.

Ibn Riḍwān's list may be supplemented by olives (*zaytūn*; *Olea europaea*), eggplants (*bādhinjān*; *Solanum melongena*), and cowpeas (*lūbiyā*; *Vigna sinensis*) which Nāṣer-e Khosraw saw in the markets of Old Cairo in late 430/1040s,[564] and by cabbage (*kurunb*; *Brassica oleracea* Capitata Group) and cauliflower (*qanbīṭ*; *Brassica oleracea* Botrytis Group) the leaves of which, cut off by the green-grocers and thrown out, were eaten by the poor during the disastrous famine of 415/1024–5.[565] Some of these plants were mentioned and discussed by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, who referred also to the most Egyptian of all Egyptian greens: *mulūkhiyya* (Tossa Jute, Jew's mallow, *Corhorus olitorius*), rocket (*jarjīr*; *Eruca sativa*), and okra, or lady's finger (*bāmiya*; *Abelmoschus esculentus*; formerly considered a species of *Hibiscus*).[566]

The cultivation of most of these vegetables in Egypt is confirmed by later authors, such as a Damascene-born al-ʿUmarī and al-Maqrīzī, a native Cairene. The list of Egyptian crops composed by Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī includes, apart from the vegetables named above, chickpeas (*ḥummuṣ*; *Cicer arietinum*), peas (*basilla*; *Pisum sativum*), and sorrel (*ḥummāḍ*; *Rumex acetosa*). Al-ʿUmarī mentioned olives, too, but according to him, they "were not abundant and, except for small quantities grown in Fayyum, they were imported and there was no interest in them."[567]

Many of the above-mentioned plants, such as garlic, onions, radish, turnip, lettuce, broad beans, chickpeas, peas, and cowpeas, were cultivated in the Nile valley at least since Pharaonic times. As for other species, such as cabbage or *mulūkhiyya*, the earliest evidence documenting their presence dates back to the Graeco-Roman period. Still others, such as colocasia, Swiss chard, and eggplant, appeared in Egypt only after the Islamic conquest.[568] Tomatoes, potatoes, and peppers, all vital for the contemporary

[564] *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 54.
[565] Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 73.
[566] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 31–79 (fols. 7*l*–19*l*).
[567] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 44. For a comprehensive list of vegetables grown in Egypt see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 42–3; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 308, 309; and al-Maqrīzī's discussion of the arable lands of Egypt where, apart from the crops' names, also details referring to their seasons are mentioned. And thus broad beans (*fūl*), cucumbers (*maqāthiʾ*), lentils (*ʿads*), chickpeas (*ḥummuṣ*), grass pea/vetch (*jullabān*), linen (*kuttān*, "of which *az-zayt al-ḥārr* is derived"), onions (*baṣal*), garlic (*thūm*), and lupine (*turmus*) were listed as winter crops. As for the summer kinds, al-Maqrīzī mentioned cowpeas (*lūbiyā*), colocasia (*qulqās*), eggplant (*bādhinjān*), radish (*fujl*), turnip (*lift*), lettuce (*khass*), cabbage (*kurunb*), and cucumber (*khiyār*); al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 100–3. Cf. similar presentation in Ibn Mammātī's *Qawānīn ad-Dawāwīn* (*Правила диванов*), 70–82.
[568] Darby, *Food*, II, 654–92; and Watson, *Agricultural Innovation*, 9–73.

Near Eastern cuisine, in the Middle Ages were an exclusive domain of South Americans.[569]

Egyptian urbanites consumed vegetables in a variety of ways: either as secondary ingredients in meat preparations or processed into side dishes, appetizers, and relishes, such as vinegar preserves (*ṣabāʾigh*) and yoghurt *hors d'œuvres*. Some of them, such as gourd/pumpkin and carrot, could also be used for sweet *khabīṣ* puddings.[570] If we are to believe the cookery books, the diversity of available vegetables notwithstanding, the choice of species used in meat preparations was rather modest. Eggplant, colocasia, carrots, chickpeas, and, less often, Swiss chard and gourd were usually added to sour meat stews (*ḥawāmiḍ*). In non-sour preparations (*sawādhij*) eggplant, carrots, and colocasia were replaced by chickpeas and, occasionally, by lentils, mung beans (*māsh*), or spinach. As for fried meat dishes, they were dominated by eggplant, spinach, and chickpeas. Most preparations, both stewed and fried, could not go without alliums, especially onions and, less frequently, garlic and leeks.

As for vegetable appetizers, or side dishes, vegetables pickled in vinegar (*mukhallāt*) were probably most popular. The cookery books include dozens of recipes for these kinds of preparations. Unlike drying, pickling was not only a way to prolong the life of seasonal greens. True, pickling made it possible to keep a ready-to-eat snack for some time, but it seems that the main value of vinegar preserves was their highly appreciated sharp taste or pungency favored in vegetables by the Galenic medicine.[571] Sometimes, this taste was improved by spices added to the marinade—as in the case of eggplant, cucumbers, and turnip, the latter being an absolute favorite among pickles. Other vegetables, such as carrots, cucumbers, cowpeas, garlic, and onions were simply put in the pickling jar with vinegar.[572] The relishes called *ṣabāʾigh* were clearly milder but also less popular: the

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569 For a convenient survey of American edible plants which were brought to the Old World in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see Paul Lunde, "New World Foods, Old World Diet," *Aramco World* 43/3 (Exhibition Issue): 48–55.

570 *Khabīṣ*-type puddings were generally made by boiling a mixture of sesame oil, syrup, flour, and, optionally, chopped vegetables. See, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 83, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 96–7; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 414; *Kanz*, 113, n. 296.

571 See below, p. 258.

572 Numerous recipes in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 395–8; *Wuṣla*, 665–720; *Kanz*, 195–215; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 25b–29a; see also al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 102 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." Cf. Expiración García, "La Conservación de los productos vegetales en las fuentas agronómicas andalusíes," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 252–93.

recipes for them are much less numerous than those for pickles. *Ṣabāʾigh* could be prepared and consumed in a number of ways: those made into a paste of spices and nuts were usually spread on chicken or fish; those made of vegetables, with or without yoghurt, were served as side dishes. The latter, best made of eggplant, gourd or Swiss chard, were prepared by cooking vegetables in salted water, drying them, and then putting them in yoghurt which had previously been mixed with garlic. Preferably, nigella was to be sprinkled on the surface.[573] In the city markets, the specialties were sold by a *bawārdī*, seller of pickled vegetables, or by a *sammān*, seller of clarified butter.[574]

Of the entire list of vegetables which were consumed in medieval Cairo there is a number of species which deserve special comment. Some of them, such as okra, *mulūkhiyya*, and grain legumes, became the distinguishing marks of contemporary Egyptian/Cairene cookery. Others, such as colocasia, today better know as taro, have lost their importance in the local menu. As for the root or, more properly, the corm of colocasia, there were two kinds of it sold in medieval Cairo: "heads" (*ruʾūs*) and "fingers" (*aṣābiʿ*). The latter, being either offshoots of the main root or a variety of the plant, was reported to have been better and more tasteful of the two and therefore more expensive.[575] The Egyptians used to peel colocasia and "split it like a turnip," and cook it in *summāqiyya* and other dishes.[576] According to ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, thick and compact colocasia tasted "like a green unripe banana." It had a "slightly styptic flavor, with a strong pungency. Boiled, it lost all its pungency, and then added a sort of gluey viscosity to its slightly styptic taste."[577]

[573] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 398–9; recipes for *ṣabāʾigh* included in *Kanz*, 174–7, 276, are recipes for pastes only.

[574] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 58–9 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 78); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 159–60.

[575] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 47 (fol. 11*l*); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 98; al-Baghdādī's and Ibn al-Ḥājj's explanation regarding the two varieties of colocasia is, by the way, an answer to Charles Perry's doubts: "*al-qulqās al-iṣbaʿ*" as mentioned in one of the recipes included in *Waṣf* did not mean taro being "cut into finger shapes" (Perry, "Familiar Foods," 328, n. 7) but finger-shaped variety of taro. Actually, Ibn al-Ḥājj devoted an entire chapter of his treaty to colocasia and to the way it was sold in the markets of Cairo; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 98–105.

[576] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 47 (fol. 11*l*). *Summāqiyya* was a dish of many varieties, generally made of stewed or cooked fat meat, choice of vegetables, and seasonings which usually included mint, sometimes walnuts, and sumac water.

[577] Ibid., 47 (fol. 11*l*).

And it was probably due to this viscosity ("which one unaccustomed to it finds disagreeable")[578] that some people preferred colocasia prepared in an alternative manner: after the vegetable had been boiled, the viscous stock was thrown out and the corm itself was fried in oil."[579] Prepared this way, colocasia became agreeable and could be added to a semi-ready meat dish with which it was cooked until done. It is quite probable, however, that colocasia was also consumed separately, as an appetizer, a side dish, or an element of the "main course." This could be the case of fried colocasia as mentioned in one of the versions of "The Christian Broker's Tale" of the *Arabian Nights*' Hunchback cycle. In one scene, the Baghdadi merchant prepares a food tray for his Cairene lover: he gets "nuts and almonds, and arranges *mufalfal* rice under them, and arranges fried colocasia, as well as fresh and dried fruits." It is almost if pieces of fried colocasia corm were eaten the way the French fries are eaten today. This, however, might have been an exclusively local specialty: a recipe for a dish called *ṭabāhajiyya* states that "some people leave colocasia fried in sesame oil on it. It is the custom of the people of Egypt, so understand that."[580]

As for okra or *bāmiya*, known also as lady's finger, there are, it seems, only three historical records referring to the preparation of this vegetable in the Middle Ages. One is included in the work of ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī who, while in Egypt in the early seventh/thirteenth century, observed that "the Egyptian people cooked [*bāmiya*] with meat, cutting it with the skin into small pieces . . . When cooked it was not griping, but became sticky."[581] Another record dealing with *bāmiya* is a recipe for a dish called *bāmiya* included in one of the manuscripts of *Kanz al-Fawāʾid*, an anonymous cookery book of the Mamluk epoch. The recipe features a dish in which

[578] Ibid., 47 (fol. 11*l*).

[579] Ibid., 47 (fol. 11*l*); al-Baghdādī noticed also that colocasia was not popular in Damascus, and that it was sold there in its dried form.

[580] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 310. See also the context in which fried colocasia is mentioned in al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 91 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación." For recipes see, for instance, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 310, 328 (*ṭabāhajiyya*, *ṭabāhaja*), 364 (*sitt shanāʿ*); *Kitāb al-Ṭibākha* in Perry, "Fifteenth-Century Cookbook," 474 (*qulqāsiyya*); *Kanz*, 31 (*summāqiyya bi-qulqās*), 36 (*laymūniyya*, *zīrbāj*), 41 (*sitt shanaʿ*), or 42 (*sikbāj*); *Wuṣla*, 569–71 (*mutawakkiliyya* and various recipes for *sitt shanāʿ*). Cf. mentions of colocasia in Goitein, *Daily Life*, 245; in aẓ-Ẓāhirī, *Zubda*, 125; in Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6; in Brown, *Voyage*, 109, where it is observed that colocasia, fried or cooked, was very much sought after by the local population. Brown maintained that it caused some flatulence but was, at the same time, an "excitant puissant." See also ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 324–5, where benefits of eating colocasia in the winter time are discussed.

[581] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 31 (fol. 7*l*).

okra, the main vegetable ingredient of a meat/chicken dish named after it, was cut into pieces and cooked in broth together with chopped onion and pre-cooked meat. The preparation was fragranced with green coriander, pepper, and garlic and soured with green lemon.[582] The third record, which is to be found in another Egyptian cookery book, *Zahr al-Ḥadīqa*, is a slightly corrupted version of the recipe included in *Kanz*.[583]

While commenting on the absence of okra from the medieval Arabic-Islamic recipes, Maxime Rodinson suggested that this plant might have been considered too commonplace to include it in the cookery books of the elites.[584] Indeed, this might have been the case. Ordinary and popular among simple people as it probably was,[585] okra was not, however, entirely absent from the Cairo elites' tables. *Bāmiya lawnayn*, or "okra dish in two ways" was reported to have been prepared in the sultan's kitchens of the Cairo Citadel. Apparently, meat cooked with okra must have been one of those dishes which found their way to the palaces directly from the Egyptian popular cuisine, without the agency of the cookery books.[586]

Unlike okra, whose existence in ancient Egypt is doubtful,[587] *mulūkhiyya*, spelled also *mulūkiyya* and known as Jew's mallow, was eaten in Egypt since antiquity.[588] By the early fifth/eleventh century its popularity in the vicinity of al-Fusṭāṭ-Cairo must have been quite high, apparently too high not to go unnoticed by the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim. Famous for his atypical style of governing, al-Ḥākim declared (possibly motivated by the "Shīʿī fanaticism") that the consumption of *mulūkhiyya* was prohibited because it had been favored by Muʿāwiyya Ibn Abī Sufyān, the historical arch-enemy of the Shīʿīs.[589] Thus the potherb became a state issue—together

[582] *Kanz*, 273, n. 29. For the contemporary version of *bāmiyya*, in which tomatoes and tomato paste constitute important ingredients, see Roden, *New Book*, 248.

[583] Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 11a.

[584] Rodinson, "Studies," 149. True, when Maxime Rodinson published his "Recherches sur les documents arabes relatifs à la cuisine," he did not know about the existence of the manuscripts of *Kanz* or *Zahr*. On the other hand, however, the argument referring to the commonness of a given food article does not really work here anyway—there were preparations commonplace no less than okra dishes, such as, for instance, pickled turnip, recipes for which were nevertheless included in cookery books.

[585] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 186.

[586] Cf. "*bāmiya lawnayn*," or "okra in two ways" as mentioned in aẓ-Ẓāhirī, *Zubda*, 125; for a short comment on *bāmyiya* see Dreher, "Regard," 79.

[587] Darby, *Food*, II, 695.

[588] Mentioned in the Book of Job, 30:4; see also Darby, *Food*, II, 670.

[589] Al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ*, II, 53, 81, 86, 90, 91, 103. For the discussion of possible reasons of this prohibition see De Smet, "Interdictions," 59–61.

with rocket (*jarjīr*), lupins and fish with no scales, which also fell prey to al-Ḥākim's eccentricity.

Al-Ḥākim's ban on *mulūkhiyya*, first issued in 395/1004–5, must have bothered the Egyptians, for as soon as his grip loosened temporarily after the 397/1006 revolt of Abū Rakwa, "people of Miṣr resumed the sale . . . of *mulūkhiyya* . . . and of all that had been prohibited in an unprecedented way."[590] The ban, suspended only some time after al-Ḥākim's death, did not, however, make the *mulūkhiyya* fall into oblivion. During the Middle Ages the plant continued to be cultivated, and in the eighth/fourteenth century its consumption must have been so popular and its presence in the market so conspicuous that Ibn al-Ḥājj, while composing his famous treatise, devoted an entire chapter on greengrocers to the *mulūkhiyya* dealers.[591] The Egyptians cooked the potherb with meat, onions, garlic, coriander, caraway, and salt into a thick fatty soup, possibly similar to what is prepared from *mulūkhiyya* today.[592] Unlike its medieval predecessor, contemporary *mulūkhiyya* soup is served with rice, as it was in Ottoman times.[593]

Pulses, or dried seeds of grain legumes (by the Arab authors classified as *ḥubūb* or seeds) which are generally considered cheap protein substitute for the poor, were uninterruptedly cultivated and consumed in Egypt (and in the Levant) since antiquity.[594] In medieval Cairo they were consumed by all orders of society, although according to different patterns. In the *haute cuisine*, pulses, mostly chickpeas, but also lentils (and, on rare occasions, broad beans and mung beans, *māsh*), were used as ingredients added to meat dishes of all kinds: sour and non-sour ones, stewed, fried, and cooked in the oven. As for the street menu, it seems that its offer

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[590] Al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 268, 269.

[591] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 97–8.

[592] For the recipes see *Kanz*, 40, 56, 269; Ibn Mubāra Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 9b, 10b, 13b; *Wuṣla*, 561–2. *Mulūkhiyya* does not appear in Iraqi cookbooks. Cf. also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 245; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6. See also a short comment in Dreher, "Regard," 79.

[593] For the Ottoman way of preparing the dish see Tugay, *Three Centuries*, 237, where it is said that "Egyptian and Sudanese specialties, such as *mulouhieh*, a green vegetable soup cooked with chicken," was eaten "with white pilav." See also entry "Al-Mulūkhiyya" in Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, 395. Ash-Shirbīnī discusses the ways *mulūkhiyya* was prepared in the eleventh/seventeenth century by the Egyptian villagers and by the city people, including the Turks, but does not mention the option with rice at all; ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 313–18.

[594] On the symbolic meaning of fava bean and its consumption in ancient Greece and Rome see Peter Garnsey and Walter Scheidel, *Cities, Peasants, and Food in Classical Antiquity: Essays in Social and Economic History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 214–25.

included such specialties as boiled (*maslūq*) chickpeas, broad beans, and lupins. Pulses were sold either as ingredients meant for further processing or for direct consumption, sprinkled with salt and cumin in order to make their digestion easier.[595] Cooked lentils (*maṭbūkh al-ʿads*) might have been sold as some kind of stuffing, for the name *ḥashw al-ʿads* ("stuffing of lentils") is also used in reference to this product.[596] It is quite possible, however, that the term "stuffing" reflected consistency of the preparation rather than the way it was used. Actually, *maṭbūkh al-ʿads*, or "cooked lentils" mentioned in a market inspector's manual, could be identical with an unnamed lentil dish described in one of the local cookery books, or at least similar to it. The compiler of the book did not provide a regular recipe, explaining that "this [lentil preparation] is cooked by the populace (*sūqa*) and all the people, and there is no point to mention it here. Anyway, I saw it being made with carrots, Swiss chard, large colocasia, and saffron, and it comes out good."[597]

The lentil-vegetable dish had its more refined version. Called *ʿads muṣaffā* or "strained lentils," it was one of the very few truly vegetarian dishes registered in the Cairene cookery books. The minor differences between particular recipes for this dish notwithstanding, all of them generally described how to make a sour-sweet, thick, pulp-like preparation made of lentils, honey, oil, vinegar, pepper, ginger, raisins, jujubes, almonds, saffron, and some spice mix which probably included cinnamon, cardamom, and cloves.[598]

The records referring to the street sale of cooked legumes are not as frequent as one might expect, considering their popularity in contemporary Cairo. The mention of women selling cooked beans in the streets of pre-seventh/thirteenth century al-Fusṭāṭ is probably the earliest account of this sort of activity in the area.[599] The remaining evidence dates back to the ninth/fifteenth century, when cooked chickpeas-, lentils-, and broad beans-dealers were mentioned in the *ḥisba* manual composed by

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595 Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 51.

596 Ibid., 50.

597 *Wuṣla*, 605.

598 *Kanz*, 54 n. 128; 274, n. 32; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 12a; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 380.

599 Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 129. Interestingly, in his *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, al-Muqaddasī mentioned that in Nablus there were "cooks who cooked lentils and unripe dates, and fried broad beans in oil, and boiled it, and sold with olives, and they salted lupine, which was eaten in significant quantities;" al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 163 (Al-Maktaba ash-Shāmila CD edition).

Ibn Bassām.[600] Cooked chickpeas and broad beans were also recorded by al-Maqrīzī who, in his annal for 807/1404–5, provided the price of these goods.[601] Due to the very perfunctory character of references to the street sale of cooked lentils, broad beans, lupins, and chickpeas, it is impossible to define who exactly consumed these preparations. The question whether the cooked pulses were exclusively the fare of the lower (and poorer) orders of the society or they were also bought as snacks or appetizers by the well-to-do must for the time being remain unresolved.

The use of vegetables in the medieval Cairene cuisine had one particularly interesting feature: in this cuisine, like in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture in general, vegetables were not really appreciated, relished, or esteemed. True, not every scholar would agree with this opinion. David Waines, for instance, while discussing the medieval Arab dietetics, pointed out that in the Arabic cookbooks vegetables were treated with a higher regard than in the book attributed to Apicius. This "is to be witnessed in dishes with meat named after a particular vegetable ingredient."[602] Indeed, the Arabic manner of naming dishes after a vegetable ingredient would have been a manifestation of the intent to honor a given plant. It seems, however, that this was not the case. Rather, names such as *bāmiya* (lit. "okra" and "okra dish"), *fūliyya* (lit. "broad beans dish"), *kurunbiyya* (lit. "cabbage dish"), or *lūbiyā* (lit. "dish of cowpeas"), were simply the most obvious way of identifying otherwise similar preparations. In other words, they were just a way to express what vegetable ingredient dominated in a given meat dish and made it different from others. The Arabic-Islamic food culture of the Middle Ages, although far from avoiding vegetables, would not pay them a tribute.

In practical terms, this means that the Cairenes could "savor all sorts of vegetables," and their ordinary course could "contain a bowl of rice or peas, haricots, lentils, chickpeas, *mulūkhiyya*, cabbage, okra, cucumbers,

600 Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 50.

601 Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/3, 1133. One of the few references (apart from cookery books) to the pre-ninth/fifteenth-century consumption of legumes is al-Maqrīzī's record mentioning lentils as a part of soldier's provision in the eighth/fourteenth century; *Sulūk*, II, 1149. For the tenth/sixteenth- and the eleventh/seventeenth-century evidence see Harant, *Voyage*, 201; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 186; ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 283, 343–4 (lentils) and 309–10, 340 (broad beans). For the uses of lupine and broad beans in contemporary Egypt see Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, entries "At-Turmus" and "Al-Fūl."

602 Waines, "Dietetics," 235.

colocasia root, yellow and red carrots . . . , etc."[603] At the same time, however, their culinary manuals seem to show that the local cuisine not only disregarded vegetables, but underestimated them, too. Actually, when one compares the Arabic-Islamic culinary manuals to the cookbook attributed to Apicius, one feels tempted to conclude that it was the Roman cuisine which accorded vegetables a higher regard. True, Romans would not name dishes after a vegetable ingredient. But they would consider meatless preparations equal in status to meat dishes[604] and, moreover, they would grant vegetables a place of honor at the table.[605] The Arabic-Islamic medieval world would not contemplate such a possibility at all.

Furthermore, Romans would not mind eating raw vegetables, seasoned with salt, spices, olive, and *garum*. This kind of food—predecessor of today's salads—would be unthinkable in the Arabic-Islamic urban food culture.[606] Moreover, although the Arabic dishes with vegetables were complex, the way in which the vegetables were used in these dishes was far from elaborate.[607] Vegetables were invariably peeled, usually cut, thrown into the boiling broth, and cooked, *Eintopf* style, with meat, fat, and seasonings, and often also with rice. The finished dish was usually served directly in the pot or ladled into a bowl. Such a careless way of treating vegetables suggests a lack of fondness for them, if not outright indifference. This way of treating vegetables generally should not be used as a universal indicator of any particular dietary tendency, as it was in fact applied by most cuisines of the time.[608] Yet, in the case of the Arabic-Islamic food culture it may prove meaningful. The meaning becomes

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[603] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185–6.

[604] In the book attributed to Apicius the meatless dishes are partly collected in the chapter devoted entirely to vegetable preparations ("Cepuros [de holeribus] liber tertius"), and partly inserted in other chapters, including the one on luxurious dishes; the chapter on dishes made of legumes ("Osperon liber quintus") includes also meat dishes.

[605] Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 209.

[606] Except, probably, cucumbers, served with yoghurt (Pococke, *Description*, 184) or eaten "completely raw" (Coppin, *Voyages*, 122). Pococke mentioned also raw onions eaten by the poor Copts; *Description*, 183.

[607] David Waines pointed out that "use of vegetables as described in the Arabic culinary corpus occurs in more complex preparations than those, for example, attributed to Apicius." Waines, "Dietetics," 235. Indeed, the Apician Roman preparations in which vegetables were used seem to be less complex when compared to corresponding dishes of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine, although the *patinae* of Apicius appear to have been quite elaborate, too.

[608] Due to the fact that no "single description of a specifically Jewish dish or meal" was found in Geniza documents, it is rather difficult to define whether Jewish predilection for vegetables, attested to in the Bible and Talmud, influenced the way the Fusṭāṭi Jews prepared and served vegetables; cf. Goitein, *Daily Life*, 227, 234.

clearer only when one compares this aspect of the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture with the Ottoman approach.

Unlike the Ottoman Turks, Arabs never manifested what might be defined as "the subtle variations in the treatment of vegetables."[609] Interestingly, Ottoman cuisine, although serving equally carnivorous appetites, prized, savored, and appreciated vegetables. The almost proverbial fifty one ways in which the Ottoman Turkish chefs could cook aubergine are probably the best example of this.[610] A medieval Cairene cook would not care to honor aubergine, or any other vegetable, so much. Nor would he care to lightly boil "leeks, carrots, and celery, just enough to soften them," then peel them into thin slices, then cut them into squares, then neatly arrange them in layers in a cooking pot, cook them in broth, and then reverse the pot onto a round dish, "where the little dolmas formed an appetizing mound."[611] The difference between the Arabic-Islamic and Turkish-Ottoman attitudes to vegetables is intriguing, particularly in the context of the similar culinary past of the two cultures.

A brief comparison may help to define the possible motives behind the "unvegetarian" attitude of the Cairenes. Due to the fact that this attitude was common for the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture in general, the explanation may be found in the Arabs' primeval dietary habits, and in the fact that the mostly nomadic traditional Arab cuisine had no use for fresh vegetables. With the diet determined by the desert environment and basically confined to dates, cereals, meat, and milk, Arabs had little chance to learn to appreciate shapes, colors,[612] consistency, texture, or delicacy of taste of vegetables.[613]

[609] Lewis, "Turkish Cuisine," 121.

[610] Ibid., 121.

[611] Togay, *Three Centuries*, 256; according to Togay, "in those days every vegetable was skillfully laid out in a cooking pot, with a few pieces of meat cut small, and sliced tomatoes at the bottom, if cooked with butter, or a whole onion when with oil, and then the finished product served reversed in a dish." Togay, *Three Centuries*, 257.

[612] Although the color of the dish was not without importance; see Manuela Marín, "Beyond Taste: the complements of color and smell in the medieval Arab culinary tradition," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 205–14.

[613] At the same time, however, the Arabs/early Muslims were, as people coming from the desert environment, naturally enchanted by plants. Moreover, they seemed to have had a special penchant for collecting both edible and decorative plants and introducing new species to their orchards and agriculture, so much so that they truly deserve to be appreciated for revolutionizing the agricultural production of the lands that fell into the Islamic domain. See Andrew Watson, "The Imperfect Transmission of Arab Agriculture into Christian Europe," in *Kommunikation zwischen Orient und Okzident. Alltag und Sachkultur* (Wien: VDOAW, 1994), 204.

The problem is, however, that the diet of the Turks before they started to settle in Anatolia had been no less nomadic than that of the pre-Islamic or the early Muslim Arabs. In fact, it may have been even harsher. Deprived of fertile oases, the Central Asian steppe did not have much more to offer than was available in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula.[614] For both the Arabs and the Turks, the conquests of more fertile lands marked a turning point in their culinary customs. Both peoples, having discovered vegetables, added them to their nomadic cuisines. Moreover, neither did it with particular fondness, using vegetables as additives rather than as important or valuable ingredients.

At some point, however, the two culinary cultures moved in different directions. The Arabic-Islamic cuisine remained indifferent and careless towards vegetables throughout the Middle Ages. The Turkish cuisine, on the other hand, underwent a process of deep and rapid transformation. While never renouncing its tradition of meat and yoghurt, it tended towards a more "subtle treatment of vegetables" and turned cooking them into a fine art.[615] This new, vegetable-friendly Turkish cuisine was born in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century, soon after Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks. Why, however, cooking vegetables in a diversity of ways became an appreciated form of art in the Turkish Ottoman Constantinople, and not in the Fatimid or Mamluk Cairo?

It seems natural to look for the answer in the origins of the two cities' culinary histories.[616] The crucial disparity is related to the fact that Cairo was a genuinely Islamic foundation, while the Ottoman Constantinople was founded on the millennium-old Byzantine Christian heritage. The Islamic origins of Cairo implied that its cuisine was set up on the culinary repertoire imported from Baghdad. Or, more precisely, on the Persian culinary traditions modified by the inventiveness of the Abbasid courtly cooks and interlaced with ancient Greek medical doctrine and the Bedouin Arab cooking ideas. The Byzantine heritage, on the other hand, included a rich, vegetable-friendly culinary tradition which manifested itself in the Byzantine appreciation for vegetables and in the excellence of

[614] On the pre-Anatolian stage in the history of the Turkish cuisine see, above all, Şavkay, "Cultural and Historical Context,"72–89.

[615] So much so that today vegetable dishes can be called "the area in which the Turkish cuisine is indisputably superior to all others;" Pekin and Sümer, *Timeless Tastes*, 186; see also ibid., 92–5 (introduction to section on "Mezes"); 116–19 (introduction to section on "Salads"); 186–211 (introduction to section on "Vegetable dishes").

[616] For a concise study of the Ottoman culinary culture see *Imperial Taste: 700 Years of Culinary Culture* (Ankara: Ministry of Culture Publications, 2000).

cooking them. Such an approach seems to have been a genuine, Constantinopolitan invention which resulted from customizing Christian fasting obligations (which were particularly demanding in the Orthodox Church) to the sophisticated style of the Orthodox emperors and their courts.[617]

In the mid-ninth/fifteenth century this refined Christian Orthodox culinary convention became booty of the Ottoman Turkmen Muslims who, merciless towards both buildings and people of Constantinople, in the Byzantine palace kitchens appeared unprejudiced, curious, and open towards the cooking art of their enemies. They readily learned and adopted culinary standards of the fallen imperial court, including those which were quite foreign to them, such as the appreciation for vegetables and the artistic approach to their treatment.[618] Moreover, the latter feature fascinated the Turks in a special way, so much so that it soon became a distinguishing mark of their newly-transformed cuisine. In other words, the Ottoman cooks' artistic mastery in preparing vegetables was originally the Byzantine court's response to the fasting demands of Wednesdays and Fridays, of Lent, of the Easter season, of Pentecost, of the fasts of the Holy Apostles, of St Philip, of the first half of August for the Feast of the Virgin, and of the forty days following November 15 for Christmas.[619] The cooks of

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[617] The possible correctness of the above conjecture is not disproved by the depictions of some banquet tables as preserved by the post-eleventh-century Byzantine iconography. The images of raw radishes, turnips, beets, and carrots which, all with their leaves or stems uncut, were pictured by Byzantine artists for symbolical reasons and not in order to show the crudeness of the imperial culinary culture. For an attempt to read the symbolism behind the Byzantine depictions of raw vegetables see Ilias Anagnostakis, Titos Papamastorakis, "'… and Radishes for Appetizers.' On Banquets, Radishes and Wine," in *Food and Cooking in Byzantium: Proceedings of the Symposium "On Food in Byzantium." Museum of Byzantine Culture, Thessaloniki 4 November 2001*, ed. Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 2005), 147–72. For valuable comments on vegetarian aspects of the Byzantine diet and on the Eastern Christian fasting traditions see Ken Parry, "Bread from Heaven: Vegetarianism in Byzantium," in *Feast, Fast or Famine. Food and Drink in Byzantium*, ed. Wendy Mayer and Silke Trzcionka, *Byzantina Australiensia* 15, Brisbane, 2005, 178–84 (many thanks to Bernardette Marthel-Thoumian for informing me about the latter publication); A.N. John's Louvaris, "Fasting and Abstinence: Some Facts of Life in Byzantium," in Mayer and Trzcionka, *Feast*, 189–98; Dalby, *Flavours*, 55–6, 93–7; Waines, "Muzawwar," 306–7.

[618] It seems there are no comparative historical studies of Greek and Turkish food by disinterested third-party scholars, as there is probably no thorough historical monograph dealing with the Byzantine cuisine; cf. comments on this question presented by Clifford A. Wright, "The Greek and Turkish Question," in *Some Facts about Mediterranean Food History*, http://www.cliffordawright.com/history/index.html. For some short remarks on the Byzantine influences on the culinary culture of the Ottomans see also Şavkay, "On Drinking and Eating," 22–3. For studies of the Byzantine food culture see, for example, Dalby, *Flavours*, *passim*; Mayer and Trzcionka, *Feast*, *passim*.

[619] For the fasting periods in Byzantium see Parry, "Bread," 184; Louvaris, "Fasting," 191.

medieval Cairo, on the other hand, never had a chance to seek inspiration from a refined culinary culture which abstained from meat-eating for over six months a year.

No doubt, the "Byzantine factor" played a significant role in the formation of the Ottoman Constantinopolitan vegetable-friendly culinary standards. The absence of this (or similar) factor was not, however, the only reason which prevented the Cairenes from appreciating and savoring vegetables. Another reason seems to have been related to the influence of the Galenic theory of humoral pathology on the thinking and everyday life of Arabic-Islamic urban populations in the Middle Ages. This theory, conditioning both the preventive and curative therapy on the proper diet, was absorbed eagerly by the Muslim Arabs in the early stages of their culture-making process. One aspect of this theory includes also a specific message regarding vegetables: "there is little benefit for the stomach from consumption of vegetables," and "all the plants in whose taste we do not discover pungency or burning or anything of that kind, but which are tasteless, are detrimental by their nature."[620] One could also learn that "all vegetables possess a noxious chyme which increases the black bile although if they are boiled and then the water is changed and boiled again, the noxious quality and acidity disappears."[621] Considering the fact that the early medieval Arabic-Islamic medicine and dietetics were based on the Greek medical thought, it should not be surprising that vegetables and garden produce did not enjoy high esteem among the Arabic-Islamic physicians.[622]

The same referred to medieval Europe, where fruits and vegetables were viewed with suspicion as "meates that breed ill blood."[623] To be sure, the Greek humoral and dietary theory was known and applied in Byzantium, too. But the diet of Byzantium, unlike that of the Islamic world, was conditioned not only by the Galenic system but also by frequent periods of austere fasting. These periods, built into the imperial liturgical calendar and thus into the food culture of the state, carried indisputable requirements. The doctrine defining vegetables as "containing bad humors," even

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[620] Both the quotations are from Galen, as quoted by al-Isrāʾīlī, a philosopher and dietician from the early Fatimid Egypt; see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 79 and 82 respectively.

[621] Ibn ʿAbd ar-Rabbihi (d. 940), *Kitāb al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, as quoted by Expiratión Garcia Sánchez, "Dietetic Aspects of Food in al-Andalus," in Waines, *Patterns*, 286. See also Waines, "Dietetics," 235.

[622] Cf. Sánchez, "Dietetic Aspects", 286.

[623] See Turner, *Spice*, 110.

if followed in Byzantine daily life, had to be ignored when confronted with the Church order to periodically refrain from meat-eating.[624]

There was no clash of opposites in the medico-culinary culture which emerged from the fusion of the classical medicine and diverse local cooking practices of the Middle East. Galenic "there is little benefit for the stomach from consumption of vegetables" fitted perfectly Muḥammadan "the chief of foods of humans in this world and the hereafter is meat,"[625] particularly that the vegetables hardly featured in the Arab diet. Actually, carnivorousness was not an immanent feature of all the ancient Greeks. There was enough room for vegetarian ideas in Greece. But it was probably only natural that the support for vegetarianism as declared by, for instance, Socrates or Plato never appealed to Muslim Arabs.[626] The same referred to the Buddhist or Jaini promotion of vegetarianism.[627] The cases

[624] For comments on the Greek humoral theory in Byzantium, and the translation of the appropriate fragments of dietary treatises, see Dalby, *Flavours*, 48, 140. The idea of non-meat therapeutic diet (see below, pp. 261–2) was followed in Byzantium as well, see Parry, "Bread," 182.'

[625] *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, "Al-Aṭʿima," 3296; cf. an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 107. The saying seems to have been in popular use in Egypt as late as the end of the eleventh/seventeenth century. See ash-Shirbīnī, *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, 352.

[626] Although this support was not completely unknown. One of the very few Arabic remarks referring to pro-vegetarian currents in ancient Greece can be found, in the negative context, in Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ* (*The Physicians' Dinner Party*). In one scene, a greedy host, apparently trying to discourage his guest from eating too much of the expensive meat dishes and to make him fill his stomach with bread and pickles instead, says: "as for meat, Socrates says: 'Do not make your stomachs a cemetery for animals.' " See *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ. The Physicians' Dinner Party. Edited from Arabic manuscripts and with an introduction by Felix Klein-Franke* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1985), 19. The same words were also mentioned by Abū Naṣr Ibn Abī ʿImrān who, in his correspondence with Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, inquired about the reasons for the latter "refusing to suffer his body to be the grave of animals." See D.S. Margoliouth, "Abū 'l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī's Correspondence on Vegetarianism," *JRAS* (1902): 295 (Arabic text), and 315 (Engl. trans.). I am grateful to prof. Katarzyna Pachniak for turning my attention to Margoliouth's publication. In this context, it may be interesting to know that the expression was not unknown in Europe. The French poet and diplomat Peter of Blois (ca. 1130–1203) used it in one of his letters while complaining about the food at the court of King Henry II of England: "we who sit at meat must fill our bellies with carrion and become graves, so to speak, for various corpses;" quoted in Turner, *Spice*, 107.

[627] The Greek and Arab positive attitudes toward meat accorded perfectly with the Ayurvedic medical doctrine which regarded meat as "the best for nourishing" and which, by the way, might have been the original inspiration behind the Greek standpoint. However, the Ayurvedic carnivorous attitude had been complicated by the Buddhist and Jaini countermovement toward vegetarianism. Both of them, formed in ca. fifth century B.C.E., promoted vegetarianism as a way of demonstrating compassion. For the meat-promoting aspects of the Ayurvedic doctrine see Vaidya Bhagwan Dash, *Fundamentals of Ayurvedic Medicine* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1992), 130; Achaya, *Indian Food*, 84–5; Collingham, *Curry*, 19–20. For a short commentary regarding the possible influence of the classical

such as that of the poet Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī, whose philosophy and diet of non-harming corresponded to Gnostic, Graeco-Roman, Manichean, Buddhist, and Jaini teachings, were exceptionally rare.[628] The Islamic world had to wait for its next avowed vegetarian until the late tenth/sixteenth century when the Mughal emperor Akbar "adopted a diet more suitable for a Hindu ascetic than for a Muslim ruler."[629] But Akbar, who developed a distaste for meat after he had fallen under that sway of the Brahmans and Jains, was not an Arab.[630]

As Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ's intellectual adversary pointed out, writing in the fifth/eleventh-century Cairo, plants were created to be utilized by animals, animals were created to be utilized by man and "you have no right to be kinder to them than their Creator."[631] Such was, it seems, not only the attitude of the Chief Fatimid Missionary who declined to understand the reasons of Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī's vegetarianism, but also the prevailing and natural attitude of most of the Islamic world. Moreover, it seems that in medieval Islam (the case of Ghulāt), very much like in the Byzantine and medieval Western Christianity (the case of Bogomils and Cathars respectively), the abstinence from meat became a criterion for assessing heretical tendencies.[632] No wonder, then, that eating too many vegetables

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doctrine of Indian medicine upon the ancient Greek medical thought see above, chapter I.1.B. "Extra-Egyptian influences," pp. 77–8.

[628] On the grounds that Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī had little chance to meet Jains in Syria, D.S. Margoliouth questioned the correctness of von Kremer's thesis according to which Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ imitated the Jaini vegetarian practices. Indeed, Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ, while in Syria, could not have encountered Jains or Buddhists personally. It is quite likely, however, that he came in touch with either some Gnostic-oriented groups or with Manicheans. The Manichean diet based on philosophy of non-harming was very close to the Gnostic and Graeco-Roman philosophical ideas (Plotinus, Proclus, Porphyry; Seneca, Plutarch) as well as to the practices of Buddhists and Jains whom Mani could have met during his trip to India. On the views of Abū-l-ʿAlāʾ al-Maʿarrī see Margoliouth, "Correspondence," *passim*. For a concise survey of meat avoidance in Graeco-Roman, Gnostic and Manichean traditions as well as on the possible Buddhist and Jaini influences on the views of Mani see Parry, "Bread," *passim*.

[629] Collingham, *Curry*, 30.

[630] Both his son Jahāngīr and his grandson Shāhjahān maintained many of Akbar's concessions, such as the ban on cow slaughter. They also continued to restrict themselves to vegetarian dishes on specified days of the week. For a concise presentation of the vegetarian diet as practiced by the members of the Mughal dynasty see Collingham, *Curry*, 30–1.

[631] Margoliouth, "Correspondence," 316.

[632] See *EI2*, II, "Ghulāt" by M.G.S. Hodgson. Cf. also al-ʿAynī's obituary for Arghun Ibn Abaqa, the Mongol khan and, at the same time, a devout Buddhist; the obituary includes a quotation from an unnamed source according to which Arghun was "one of Majūs, a sect famous for its witchcraft and worshiping of idols; their way was especially followed by a sect related to the Brahmans of al-Hind. Arghun used to spend each year forty days

was considered improper by the gentlemen of Baghdad,[633] and that in Cairo the meatless food was, somewhat contemptuously, called "snacks of the market place."[634]

It seems that the Greek medicine encouraged the "anti-vegetarian" approach among the Cairenes through yet another channel, namely, through the concept of the non-meat diet meant as a remedy for the sick. The idea of the therapeutic qualities of meatless food first appeared in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture in two forms, both involving the so-called *muzawwarāt*, or meatless dishes imitating those which contained meat. One, popularized as "the *muzawwarāt* dishes which the Christians eat in the time of fasting," was an import from the local Christian Nestorian tradition of fasting. The other, simply called "the vegetable *muzawwarāt* eaten by the sick," reflected the Greek idea of curing certain illnesses by vegetarian diet. Both seem to have been inserted into the Arabic-Islamic culinary corpus by the Christian Nestorian physicians who, working in the third/ninth-century Baghdad or Gondēshāpūr, translated the Hippocratic-Galenic medical texts into Arabic.[635]

This stage is well documented in the fourth/tenth-century Iraqi *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, or the earliest of the extant Arabic culinary manuals. As its compiler, Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, included in his work apparently all of the then-prevalent proposals for regular and irregular diet, one can find there also the chapter "On broths and meats eaten by the ailing,"[636] apart from the chapters "On the *muzawwarāt* dishes which the Christians eat in the time of fasting"[637] and "On the vegetable *muzawwarāt* eaten by the sick."[638] With time, the concept of therapeutic diet evolved. Meat dishes,

in seclusion to practice piety, and he refrained from meat-eating;" al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, I, 233.

633 Al-Washshā, *Muwashshā*, 191.

634 Cf. above, the discussion on al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), in "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57–64.

635 For comments on Christian contribution to the Arabic-Islamic medical tradition see, for example, Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 5–9; *EI2,* X, "Ṭibb" by E. Savage-Smith.

636 Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, Chapter 106, 285–7 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 438–41).

637 Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, Chapter 46, 119–24 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 238–9). For an example of fasting regulations as recorded in medieval Jacobite Christian writings see, for example, Bar Hebraeus, *Al-Īthīqūn. Falsafat al-Ādāb al-Khulqiyya* (Qamishli, 1967), 146–54.

638 Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, Chapter 105, 281–4 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 433–7). Some recipes of this chapter were quoted from Ibn Māsawayh, a famous Christian physician and dietician from Baghdad (d. 243/859).

still present in al-Warrāq's compilation as remedies for certain illnesses,[639] disappeared completely from recommendations for the sick, while the Hellenistic and Nestorian "vegetarian" concepts apparently merged and became at some point acknowledged in the Near East as a way to cure the ailing.

Such was, at least, the case of Cairo. In *Waṣf al-Aṭʿima al-Muʿtāda*, a cookbook composed (very probably) in the eighth/fourteenth-century Cairo, vegetarian dishes are included in one chapter whose title suggests its multifarious background: "On what is eaten by the sick and monks and Christians during the Lent."[640] This chapter, apart from being a set of theoretical instructions on how to cure the sick, was also a reflection of reality: in Cairo of the High Middle Ages it was unthinkable for anybody not to avoid feeding meat dishes to the sick.[641] Such meatless dishes, while constituting a rightful part of the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary tradition, never became a rightful part of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine. Considered a therapy for invalids, they were, in fact, nothing more than that. Nothing can probably reveal their position better than the Arabic term designating them, *muzawwarāt*. As *muzawwarāt*, or "counterfeit dishes," they only simulated or imitated those which contained meat.

Placing vegetables in a somewhat defective position resulted then from the fusion of a number of tendencies. The ancient Greek disapproval of vegetables as food items, combined in one food culture with approving them as remedies, the Nestorian Christian fasting regulations, and the Islamic positive encouragement of meat-eating: this could not have generated pro-vegetarian sympathies. This combination, greatly responsible for shaping nutritional preferences of many of Islamic urban centers, influenced Cairo as well. One effect was that the medieval Cairene cook—unlike the Ottoman Constantinopolitan cook—not only lacked the pro-vegetarian

[639] See also meats and meat dishes as analyzed and presented in Ibn Buṭlān's *Taqwīm aṣ-Ṣiḥḥa*, in Hosam Elkhadem, *Le Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥa* (*Tacuini Sanitatis*) *d'Ibn Buṭlān: un traité médical du XI*^e^ *siècle. Histoire du Texte, édition Critique, Traduction, Commentaire* (Leuven: Peeters 1990).

[640] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 443. The compiler of *Waṣf* quotes this chapter after Ibn ʿAbdūn (see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 1. "Cookery books," p. 37, n. 50). Some recipes of the *muzawwarāt* kind are included in *Kanz*, chapter titled "What the sick eat of fake vegetable dishes." 81–9; for discussion on particular recipes for such dishes see Waines, Marín, "Muzawwar," 308–10.

[641] Cf. a phrase pronounced by one of the characters of al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*): "Never as yet has a physician prescribed meat for the sick;" see p. 97 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. trans. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 10).

inspiration but was also in many ways discouraged from appreciating qualities of the vegetables.[642]

With time, changing circumstances modified the prevailing style. By the later Middle Ages the physician's status declined and so did the position of the Greek tradition in the Islamic medicine. By virtue of being non-Islamic and pagan, Greek thought, gradually removed from medical education and scholarship, gave way to the so-called medicine of the Prophet.[643] When the Ottoman state became an empire, and when the Byzantine culinary culture fused with the Turkish one, the classical Greek thought was no longer in vogue in the Islamic world. True, the tenets of the Greek medicine did not disappear completely from the life of the Cairenes. Some of its messages survived the Middle Ages and, combined with the Islamic tradition, were transmitted by more or less professional authors.[644] It is difficult to say what happened to the idea of defining vegetables as valueless on the one hand, and as remedies on the other. Most probably, the idea gradually lost its power. Be that as it may, the

[642] For remarks on non-meat dishes as opposed to meat food see also above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57ff.; and chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 173–4.

[643] A decree prohibiting Jews and Christians to practice medicine amongst the Muslims must have contributed to the decline of the Galenic theory; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 384 (the annal for 852/1448–9). Cf. Moshe Perlmann, "Notes on the Position of Jewish Physicians in Medieval Muslim Countries," *IOS* II, 1972, 315–19. On medicine and physicians in late medieval Cairo see Behrens-Abouseif, "Fatḥ Allāh and Abū Zakariyya: Physicians under the Mamluks," *Suplément aux AI*, Cahier No 10 (Le Caire: IFAO, 1987), 17–19. For discussion of the medicine of the Prophet see Irmeli Perho, *Prophet's Medicine: A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars*, *Studia Orientalia* 74 (Hesinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1995). While describing the fifteenth-century Cairo, Max Rodenbeck suggested that the level of medicine had declined there because in the Mamluk era "interest in human medicine . . . waned in favor of the veterinary science required by the horse-mad Mamluks;" Rodenbeck, *Cairo*, 137. A meaningful example of the state of the Cairene medicine in the ninth/fifteenth century can be found in the writings of Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī. There is a scene in one of this author's stories, when its protagonist, suffering from tumor, visits a doctor. The latter recommends a treatment based on avoidance of certain foods. The list of forbidden dishes includes: colocasia, *fūliyya*, *bāmiya*, *mulūkhiyya*, *mumazzaja*, *būrāniyya*, *rūmiyya*, *taqliyya*, *shushbark*, *tuṭmāj*, geese, chicken, *māwardiyya*, *mazāj*, eggs, fried cheese, *mufalfal* rice, as well as fried dishes in general. See Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 73; also short comment in Marín, "Literatura," 144–5. For remarks on medical practice in the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century Egypt see Alpin, *La médicine des Égyptiens*, *passim*; Brown, *Voyage*, 187; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 68.

[644] For the study of works where authors did not confine themselves to commenting the appropriate *ḥadīths*, but attempted to combine them with legacy of the Graeco-Islamic medical lore, see Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, *passim*. Ash-Shirbīnī's dietary comments in *Hazz al-Quḥūf* are probably the best example of how elements of the Galenic doctrine endured in times when the Greek medicine as such was not practiced anymore. See *Hazz al-Quḥūf*, I, pt. 2 (215–436), numerous fragments.

Byzantine-Turkish pro-vegetarian cuisine, immediately styled "Ottoman," followed the Ottoman governors and officials to their overseas posts and disregarded the Galenic attitude.

Since "in matters of life-style, the upper classes in Egypt followed Ottoman aristocratic fashions,"[645] the part of the Cairene food culture was, gradually, customized to the new culinary style. It seems, however, that the subtle treatment of vegetables or artistic approach to their shapes, colors, consistency, texture, or delicacy of taste never really attracted the Cairene cooks nor the local consumers. After four centuries of firm but limited presence, the reverence for vegetables disappeared from Cairo together with the Ottomans and the excellent chefs.[646]

7. Fruit[647]

Fruits, very much like vegetables,[648] were not held in high esteem by the medieval Arabic-Islamic dieticians. Ar-Rāzī (the third-fourth/ninth-tenth centuries), for example, maintained that fresh fruits belonged to "foods of bad complexion" and therefore "everyone should avoid them, save in summer time, when bodies were overheated and dehydrated."[649] Moreover, "most fruits were medical, therefore addiction to them spoiled the blood."[650] Isḥāq al-Isrāʾīlī, ar-Rāzī's Egyptian contemporary, confirmed that "people should have been cautious of all fruits . . . , except if they were tired or on a journey, or when it was very hot."[651] Al-Isrāʾīlī recommended that in such situations "it might be beneficial to eat moist fruits such as

645 Zubaida, "Rice," 97.

646 Much more than in Cairo, the traces of Turkish influences are to be found in contemporary Syria, where salad vegetables are still cut into even, tiny cubes, where the ways of preparing the aubergine are more numerous than in any other Arab country, and where dishes are garnished in a particularly elegant and subtle way.

647 The present chapter does not deal with fruits as ingredients of electuaries and medicinal or tonic concoctions. For discussion on these see below, pt. III, chapter V.2. "*Ashriba*: syrupy 'drinks'," pp. 461–2, 464.

648 Many botanical fruits are treated as vegetables in cooking. This refers, for example, to cucurbits, tomato, or eggplant. The present study deals with "fruits" in the culinary sense, that is generally sweet tasting plant products associated with seed(s)—as opposed to vegetables which are savory or less sweet plant products.

649 See Rosa K. Brabant, "Al-Rāzī on When and How to Eat Fruit," in Waines, *Patterns*, 323–4; idem, "Apuntes sobre el consume de fruta en el mundo árabe medieval," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 296–7.

650 Ar-Rāzī, as quoted in Brabant, "Al-Rāzī," 323–4.

651 Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 78.

mulberry, *ijāṣ* plums, grapes, figs, peaches, cucumbers and melons."[652] In fact, the two opinions were just an echo of Greek prejudices according to which "cold" and "moist" fruit produced poor chime and when digested, were transformed into yellow bile and could cause certain illnesses. Galen himself is supposed to have maintained that he never had a fever because he never ate fruit.[653] Besides, fruits did not provide a good nourishment and were useful as medicines rather than as food.[654] Another element of Hellenic thinking on fruits that managed to make its way into a number of medieval Islamic dietary treatises was the thesis that the wild growing species were most detrimental to human health, while the orchard ones were better. Of the orchard varieties, the most nourishing were figs, while grapes came right after them.[655]

It is difficult to establish how far these concepts, validated by the Islamic culture and implemented by the local doctors, were accepted and followed in the Egyptian capital of the Middle Ages. The matter of the Egyptians' preference for the orchard varieties of figs and grapes may prove unsolvable. Figs and grapes were cultivated and consumed in Egypt since Pharaonic times anyway, and no dietary doctrine was needed to encourage the local population to appreciate these fruits. At the same time, figs and grapes, however plentiful and nourishing, always had to compete with dates in the areas stretching south and east of the Mediterranean. Dates were not only more plentiful but also more nourishing and more durable. As such, they enjoyed a very special position in the food culture of the region—from Egypt, where the date palm probably originated, to the Middle East and North Africa. The particular position of dates referred to both the nutritional and cultural context and was equally valid for the sedentary and nomadic people and for all historical periods. The value of dates, which were especially favored by the Prophet, gained an additional spiritual dimension after the rise of Islam.

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[652] Ibid., 78; cf. also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 62–4 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 155–8).

[653] See Jean-Louis Flandrin, "Seasoning, Cooking, and Dietetics in the Late Middle Ages," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 321.

[654] Cf. Brabant, "Al-Rāzī," 314; idem, "Apuntes," 296. For therapeutic qualities of particular fruits see, for example, al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 49–50, 62–4 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 139–40, 155–8); al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, appropriate sections; appropriate entries in Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 225–345; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XI, 86–184; also a short note in Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, I/1, 43.

[655] Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 76–7. Cf. Sanchéz, "Dietetic aspects," 285–6; Brabant, "Apuntes," 295–308.

The concept of fruits as carriers of certain medicinal qualities must have been relatively popular throughout the Middle Ages, so much so that it significantly influenced fruit consumption in Egypt. While sour fruits, such as unripe grapes, lemons, citrons, pomegranates, and tamarind were supposed to balance the impact of summer heat,[656] melons were considered beneficial for health and, as such, were eaten with sugar,[657] another strongly health-stimulating and therapeutic item. Melons were "good for the breast, cough, kidneys, wounds in lungs, and bladder."[658] Little wonder that in the calamitous eighth/fourteenth century they became, together with quinces, pomegranates, and pears, the sought-after cure against the plague and other epidemic diseases.[659] The Greek concepts regarding therapeutic and soothing properties of fruits proved to be particularly long-lived. Having survived the Middle Ages, the Ottoman occupation, and all the subsequent epochs, they manifest themselves today in, for example, the Cairenes' common belief in panacean powers of lemon and lime.[660]

As for the recommendation to avoid fruits and restrict their consumption to the hottest summer days or journeys, it seems hardly probable that it was followed in medieval Cairo. As in most of the Near Eastern cities, the supply of fruits in Cairo was high, and so was the demand for them. The selection that the city markets offered was wide.[661] There were apples (*tuffāḥ*), pears (*kummathrā*), various kinds of melons (*baṭṭīkh aṣfar*, *baṭṭīkh akhḍar*, *ḍamīrī*, *ṣayfī* or *ʿAbdallī*), figs (*tīn*), and sycamore figs

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[656] See Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 133, 139.

[657] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 73 (fol. 18*r*); according to al-Baghdādī, it was "rare to find among the melons of Egypt a downright sweet and perfect flavor . . . The most dominant taste was a sort of watery insipidity;" ibid., 75 (fol. 18*l*).

[658] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 63 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 156); see also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 349–50.

[659] See, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 55 (the annal for 709/1309–10); III/1, 236 (the annal for 776/1374–5); III/2, 577 (the annal for 790/1388–9); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 689 (the annal for 806/1402–3); II, 6 (the annal for 816/1413–14). Judging upon Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 738, during the epidemic of 808/1405–6 it was the pulp of quinces that became the most demanded antidote against the illnesses which hit Egypt that year. For an interesting reference to the consumption of melons in the tenth/sixteenth-century Cairo see *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 44.

[660] See below, pt. III, chapter V.2. "*Ashriba*: syrupy 'drinks'," pp. 461–2.

[661] For names of fruits available in medieval al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo see, for example, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 54; Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 132–33; Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 65, 66, 68; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 33–37, 55–59, 65, 67, 69, 73–5, 77, 79 (fols. 8*r*–9*r*, 13*l*–14*l*, 16*r*, 16*l*, 17*r*, 18*r*–18*l*, 19*r*, 19*l*); al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 102–3; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 308, 309; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 41–2, 213; I/2, 365; Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 186.

(*jummayz*) which were loved by Egyptians since antiquity and which were "excessively sweet" though leaving "a woody taste" in the mouth.[662] There were quinces (*safarjal*), plums (*barqūq*), *ijāṣ* plums (probably *Prunus armeniaca* L. or *Prunus domestica* L.),[663] and sorb-apples (*qarāṣiyā*, *Pirus sorbus* Gaertn. or *Sorbus domestica*, the service tree), which resembled "the plum but were much smaller, had an acid taste and were widespread in Egypt and in Syria."[664] There were mulberries (*tūt*, *firṣād*), pomegranates (*rummān*), peaches (*khūkh*), and grapes (*ʿinab*), apricot (*mishmish*), and dates (*balaḥ*, *tamar*) the quality of which, however, could rarely be compared to those of Iraq.[665] There was rare and expensive *labakh* fruit (*Albizzia lebbeck*), "green and shaped like a date, very sweet but of an unpleasant taste" that "the people of Egypt served together with fruits and snacks [*anqāl*]."[666] And there were bananas (*mawz*) the pulp of which was "sweet but a little insipid, like that of the date eaten with bread."[667] Dipped in honey, syrup, or molasses, possibly sprinkled with some rose-water, bananas were a dainty for both an impoverished hashish addict and the Mamluk sultan.[668] And there was also *sidr*, a thorny tree (*Zizyphus spina-christi*) whose extremely sweet fruit, called *nabq*, is sometimes confused with jujube (*ʿunnāb*; *Zizyphus sativas*) which also grew in Egypt.[669] And, finally, there were "acid fruits of which one found in Egypt a large number of different species," including *kubbād* or trifoliate orange (*Poncirus trifoliata*), *nāranj* or bitter orange, varieties of lemon (*laymūn*) and of citron (*utrujj*, Citron, cedrate, *Citrus medica* L.) or "medicinal apple" as Maimonides called it.[670]

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[662] See al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 37–39 (fols. 9*r*–9*l*), where a detailed description of the sycamore is presented; see also Bremond, *Voyage*, 33–4; and Norden, *Travels*, I, 50, where the nutritional importance of the sycamore fig is stressed: "the people, for the greater part, live upon this fruit; and think themselves well regaled, when they have a piece of bread, a couple of sycamore figs, and a pitcher filled with water from the Nile." See also Darby, *Food*, II, 744–45.

[663] In his *Ṣubḥ*, III, 308, al-Qalqashandī mistakenly stated that *ijāṣ*, like walnuts, pistachios and hazelnuts, did not grow in Egypt and that they were imported from abroad in their dried form, like these nuts. On *ijāṣ* see also below, n. 738.

[664] Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 259–60; Arabic *qarāṣiyā* may also designate the fruit of the cherry tree; for identification see Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 259–60. Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 77 (fol. 19*r*) describes *qarāṣiyā* as "small sour plum."

[665] Ibid., 67 (fol. 16*l*).

[666] For a detailed description of the fruit see ibid., 33–7 (fols. 8*r*–9*r*).

[667] For a detailed description of the fruit see ibid., 55–63 (fols. 13*l*–15*l*).

[668] See, for example, Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 45, 54, 59, 70, 72, 73, 144, 145; al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104 (also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210); Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 357.

[669] See Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 206, 223; al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 79 (fol. 19*l*).

[670] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 65–7 (fols. 16*r*–16*l*), mentions over six varieties of citrus fruits.

All that abundance notwithstanding, Europeans found reasons to complain. "There is not many fruits in Egypt,"[671] some of them would say stressing, at the same time, that the varieties "which grow there [such as grapes, figs, melons, bananas, dates] are perfect."[672] Others would grumble that "there is nothing but dates, citrons, oranges, peaches, apricots, and the like, the taste of which is insipid."[673] Still others simply missed their home crops: "[in Egypt] they have no pears, apples, prunes or grapes; these are usually imported by the sea from Damascus and are very expensive . . . Anyway, we would willingly give all the plentiful lemons and pomegranates for a simple apple."[674] Christophe Harant, who wrote these words in the end of the tenth/sixteenth century, was right. The fertile Nile valley could bear a lot of different fruits, particularly after the "agricultural revolution" had introduced a number of new species to Egypt.[675] But not all the plants took to Egyptian soil. Fruits such as olives, pears, apples, quinces, plums, and pomegranates, even if cultivated in Egypt, had to be imported from Syria because the taste value of Syrian varieties was much higher. Egyptian quinces were "very bad, small, and of rough taste," apples were "edible, although poor in quality," while pomegranates were "fruits of excellent quality, but nevertheless not of perfect sweetness."[676] Obviously enough, Syrian fruits must have been more expensive than the local crops. However, it is difficult to imagine that Christophe Harant, or any of his European travelling companions, could not afford an apple which he so much craved. One explanation of this strange situation might be that by the end of the tenth/sixteenth century the trade with the Levant suddenly declined and the deliveries from Syria became rare, in consequence of which the prices rose significantly. Another possibility is that the Cairene

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[671] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 169.

[672] Ibid., 169.

[673] Fermanel, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 93; Stochove, in ibid., 92.

[674] Harant, *Voyage*, 71.

[675] The species which were brought to Egypt after the Islamic conquest included banana, some citrus fruits, watermelon or coconut palm. Mulberries, plums, apricots and peaches were, most probably introduced to Egypt in the Graeco-Roman period. Fruits such as dates, sycamore figs, *nabq*, grapes, pomegranates, and, probably, olives and pears, were cultivated in Egypt since Pharaonic times. However, many of the ancient Egyptian fruits are difficult to identify, as the origins of many species are unclear and the records relating to them extremely uncertain. For a detailed study of fruits in ancient Egypt see Darby, *Food*, II, 697–756. For the species introduced to Egypt after the Islamic conquest see Watson, *Agricultural Innovation*, 42–61.

[676] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 73–9 (fols. 18*r*–19*l*); cf. al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83.

grocer from whom Harant tried to buy Syrian apples inflated their price enormously, hoping to make easy money off a naïve foreigner.

The question of Syrian fruits sold in the markets of Cairo is intriguing for other reasons. S.D. Goitein suggested once that the species imported to Egypt from the Levant would not survive the journey and they must have been transported in dried or semi-dried state. As such—Goitein maintained—they had been sold in the street of the *nuqliyyūn*, or the Street of Nuts' and Dried Fruits' Dealers in al-Fusṭāṭ.[677] Indeed, due to the peculiarities of the local climate, the transport of fresh, perishable fruits from Syria to Cairo might have been a hopeless undertaking. This, however, was not necessarily the case. Despite the extremely unfavorable climate circumstances, the transport of perishable and cryophilic goods along the medieval desert or sea routes was by no means unworkable. True, the local businessmen must have experienced a catastrophe from time to time, such as that which happened to one of John Steinback's heroes who tried to transport ice-protected lettuce across the early twentieth-century USA.[678] Generally, however, medieval caravans successfully carried melons from Khwarizm to Baghdad in lead ice-boxes,[679] while companies operating in the sea and trans-desert routes of the eastern Mediterranean transported to Cairo loads of ice imported from the Lebanon Mountains.[680] Compared to ice, apples or pomegranates were not really a challenge—actually, there was no particular reason why ice-covered fruits, especially if sent unripe, would not be able to survive a similar journey.

For the time being, it may be difficult to confirm with certainty that fruits imported to Egypt from abroad and sold in the local markets were fresh. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose they were not. Clearly enough, the logic behind importing Syrian fruits to Cairo was to enjoy the quality and taste of fresh items. Articles such as dried Syrian

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677 Goitein, *Daily Life*, 246.

678 John Steinbeck, *East of Eden* (New York: Penguin. John Steinbeck Centennial Edition, 2002), pt. IV, 434–8.

679 Mez, *Renesans islamu*, 403.

680 The ice transported from Lebanon was said to have reached the cold store of the Cairo Citadel in a basically unchanged form; see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, XIV, 395–7. According to Ahsan, *Social Life*, 115, ice was probably transported "in the *khaysh* canvas and fully covered with sawdust." On the transport of ice in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world see Paul Lunde, "The Iceman Cometh," *Saudi Aramco World*, 29/5 (Sept./Oct. 1978). See also accounts of Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, according to whom in Syria people had "a way of conserving snow the whole year by certain contrivances." In the summer the Damascenes cooled with it their drinks and "put it on the fruit, so they are fresh when eaten, and so iced are they that it is a pleasure;" Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 87, 143, 183.

apples or dried Syrian pears were unlikely to win the fame which Syrian fruits managed to acquire, in both Iraq and Egypt.[681] Besides, the Cairene grocer would not enormously inflate the price of dried fruits, nor would Christophe Harant come across a dried apple which he could not afford.[682]

Imported or locally grown, fresh pears, apples, plums, figs, melons, quinces, and bananas were appreciated in Cairo as much as anywhere else in the Near and Middle East. Fresh fruits seem to have been consumed there in significant quantities in the Middle Ages; interestingly, from the theoretical point of view the question of their consumption was much more complicated than simple consumption of an apple or a pear. About the fourth/tenth century, the Arabic-Islamic physicians and dieticians became involved in a dispute on whether fruit should be eaten before or after the meal. The problem seemed unsolvable: some recommended eating fruits as starters, others argued they should have been taken as a dessert. Still others, such as ar-Rāzī, agreed with neither of these opinions and developed their own theory.[683] The problem seemed to be of consequence in certain circles, so much so that elements of the dispute found their way into the table manners manuals. As the physicians' views differed, recommendations presented by authors of such manuals differed as well. The same must have applied to the actual behavior of the consumers. Apparently, after the initial confusion the concept of serving fruits as *hors d'œuvres* prevailed: fruit should be eaten before the meal because it was digested faster than other foods and because it was perishable.[684]

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[681] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 108–10.

[682] In fact, most of the references to fruits imported from Syria suggest these were not dried fruits; see al-Musabbiḥī's mention of Lebanese apples, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 82; Ibn Iyās's mention of Syrian apples, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 365; the same author's mention of Syrian "pears, apples, quinces, etc." in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 41; and of Syrian pears, in *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 689; Leo Africanus's mention of Syrian "pears, quinces, pomegranates, etc.," l'Africain, *Description*, 504; Harant's mention of pears, apples, plums, and grapes, imported from Damascus, Harant, *Voyage*, 71; and the mention of Syrian mulberries as included in a recipe for storing fresh mulberries (i.e. for "all kinds of mulberries except for Syrian ones, for there is another way for them"), *Kanz*, 258, n. 736.

[683] Brabant, "Al-Rāzī," 319–25; also idem, "Apuntes," 297–301; see also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 62–3, 64 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 155–6, 157). Cf. Flandrin ("Seasoning," 321) according to whom European dieticians of the Late Middle Ages recommended that fruits considered cold or "subject to putrescence," such as sweet cherries, plums, apricots, peaches, figs, blackberries, grapes and especially melons (reputed to be most dangerous of all) were to be eaten at the beginning of the meal. Others, such as apples, pears, quinces or chestnuts, were better eaten at the end of the meal because they had the virtue of preventing other foods from "coming up."

[684] See also below, pt. II, chapter IV.2.B.3. "Serving. Presentation and tableware," pp. 427–8. Most probably, the problem did not concern people of modest means who ate fruits with cheese and bread; see Wild, *Voyages*, 179.

Fresh fruits, however, constituted only a part of the total Cairene fruit consumption. Like most fresh foodstuffs not intended for immediate consumption, fruits which had not been eaten raw had to be either cooked or preserved without delay. As far as preserving is concerned, drying was the simplest and the most natural method of prolonging the fruit's life. In the area covered by the Arabic-Islamic food culture fruit, especially grapes, dates and figs, were dried in significant quantities. They were eaten in this form either as ingredients of various cooked dishes or as *nuql*, autonomous snacks which could be consumed according to the eater's discretion—before, during, or after the meal.[685] Easy and effective as it was, drying as a technique of preservation had its drawbacks. It changed most of the fruits' original properties such as taste, texture, and composition and, moreover, it was very unsophisticated. Not surprisingly, the medieval Near East, so abundant in fruit, so cultured and inventive, worked out a variety of other ways of storing and preserving fruit.

In order to present these ways in more detail, however, certain qualification is necessary. Today, the term "preserves" brings to mind jams, marmalades, fruit pickles, chutneys, etc. that, jugged or canned, can be stored for years. When applied to products made in the medieval Near Eastern kitchens, the term may prove somewhat confusing, if only because the Near Eastern "preserves" did not keep that long. Salt and vinegar pickles (*mulūḥāt* and *mukhallāt*), prepared in order to preserve and flavor the fruit, could probably be stored for no longer than a few weeks.[686] Moreover, some of these pickles were not so much pickled but marinated, prepared in order to create a new flavor and, sometimes, a more tender consistency. The short-lasting preservation—achieved by the acidity or salinity of the marinade—was only a side effect. Marinated fruits could be kept for no more than a few days.[687] The Arabic-Islamic jams (*murabbayāt*) were in fact limited to a product made of roses that was actually a marinade. Contemporary-style jams, or preserves made by boiling fruit with sugar, were not common then.

685 Usually, *nuql* were nuts, almonds and dried fruits. On the medieval Near Eastern appetizers see, for example, Ahsan, *Social Life*, 112.

686 Pickling is the process of preserving food by fermentation in a solution of salt in water, or marinating and storing it in an acid solution, usually vinegar.

687 Marinating is the process of soaking foods in a marinade, that is seasoned, often acidic and oily liquid. The acidity or salinity of the marinade hamperes the growth of bacterias or fungi.

In terms of the Arabic culinary literature, preservation *sensu stricto*, having little to do with pickling and even less with marinating, was more closely related to hoarding and storing techniques. True, in practice the techniques and effects of hoarding and storing on the one hand, and marinating or pickling on the other, might have sometimes overlapped. However, the theory (as presented in some of the Arabic-Islamic cookbooks) clearly distinguished between these operations. While pickling and marinating were meant to create a new flavor, the purpose of storing (*khazn*) and hoarding (*iddikhār*) was to keep the fruit (or vegetable) "alive" for longer period in a relatively unchanged form and "almost fresh;" or, in other words, to make it look and taste "as if it has just been picked from the tree."[688] This could be done, for example, by burying the fruit in barley or immersing it in honey or wine. Actually, the techniques of fruit storing could include making pickles, provided, however, that pickling was only a way to store fruit—the appearance of any new taste would be an undesirable side effect here.

The authors of Arabic culinary literature generally avoided discussing the question of storing and hoarding techniques.[689] This should not be surprising: after all, storing and hoarding had little to do with the art of cooking. At the same time, the traditional techniques must have been common knowledge. Still, while the same was probably true of ancient Rome, Apicius decided to include quite a number of suggestions in his work on how to keep various fruits fresh. He apparently believed that a provident cook should be familiar with such aspects of running the kitchen affairs. Apicius also assumed that an inexperienced cook might not have possessed this kind knowledge. Incidentally, many of the Apician recipes for storing fruits bear a striking resemblance to what the medieval Arabic know-how recommended in this domain.[690] Or, rather, the Egyptian know-how, for the only two Arabic-speaking authors to present the ways of storing and hoarding in their cookbooks were, most probably, inhabitants of Egypt. One was the anonymous compiler of *Kanz al-Fawāʾid*. The other was

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[688] *Kanz*, 257, n. 732.

[689] The Andalusian-Maghrebian cookery books do not discuss these questions, either. The study by Expiración García on preserving fruits and vegetables in Islamic Spain is based on a number of agricultural treatises; see Expiración García, "La Conservación de los productos vegetales en las fuentas agronómicas andalusíes," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 252–93.

[690] Cf. Apician prescriptions on how to keep grapes, quinces, and other fruits fresh; Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, XVII–XXII.

Shihāb ad-Dīn Ibn Mubārak Shāh, who copied a significant number of recipes and instructions he had found in *Kanz* into his *Zahr al-Ḥadīqa*.

Generally, there were two basic modes of storing fruits. One involved keeping them dry and cooled by various means, the other consisted in immersing (*taghmīr*) fruits in some kind of preserving liquid. The latter method required that the fruit's stems be waxed, "so that they do not absorb honey which is poured over them."[691] In the case of certain fruit both techniques were applicable. Quinces, for example, could be well stored when placed in sawdust or barley straw. Wrapped in fig leaves, they could also be covered with clay kneaded with barley straw, or put in a large jar (*khābiya*) kept in a cool room.[692] To preserve peaches, it was enough to immerse them in sweet wine (*nabīdh*) and seal the vessel's lid with clay; or to cover them, mixed with sorb-apples, with cooked honey in which they could stay for a year. To use the fruits, one had to take them out, leave them on a sieve for some time, and then wash them gently in lukewarm water.[693]

The number and inventiveness of various prescriptions dealing with the storage of grapes may suggest that grape crops were particularly abundant in medieval Egypt.[694] Thus one could store grapes in a glass or clay vessel filled with sumac water and sealed with gypsum. Good effects could be also obtained by covering grape bunches with the ash of burned fig leaves and wood, as well as by immersing them in purslane juice or in a mixture of vinegar and paste of dried dates (*dibs*). One could also soak grape bunches in a stock of dill (*shabath*) or in a mixture of water and ebony shavings, or in rice dust, or in vine ashes, and subsequently spread them or hang in a clean, mildly cool place. Other techniques involved putting grape bunches in a vessel filled with cow excrement and a little bit of white clay and placing it in a clean, cool place, the vessel's lid sealed with clay. There is also a recipe which recommends immersing grape bunches in water and salt and piling them up on lupine, bean, or barley straw in a cool, dark place. Another suggests arranging grape bunches in a new pottery vessel (*fakhkhār*), cover its opening with a piece of tightly drawn leather, and then bury the vessel in dust. One could also keep a jar (*jurra*) with grapes immersed in water, bury grape bunches in barley, or wrap

[691] *Kanz*, 258, n. 737.
[692] Ibid., 252, n. 720; 262, n. 749; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 29a.
[693] *Kanz*, 251, n. 718; 258, n. 735.
[694] On the medieval Egyptian viticulture see below, pt. III, chapter VI.3. "Wine in Egypt," pp. 497–8.

them in fluffy woollen cloth. The cloth, especially if soaked in garlic water, was said to have been an effective protection against hornets and bees. Cutting grape bunches together with branch and leaves, and subsequently dipping the cut end in dissolved pitch, made the fruits keep and "stay juicy throughout the winter."[695]

The instructions for storing other fruits are significantly less numerous. Apricots were to be simply placed in powdered saffron or, if it was not available, in safflower seeds.[696] Pears were to be closed in a new earthenware jar (*jurra*) and buried in soil. Stored this way, they were supposed to remain "intact and healthy."[697] Hoarding citrus fruits was equally simple: to keep citrons juicy and fresh it was enough to coat them with gypsum or bury them in barley or in soft sand. Lemons, with their branches uncut, were to be placed in vessels (*barānī*) filled with moist powdered clay, and stored for two or three months.[698] The recipe for storing mulberries was slightly more complicated: the fruit was to be placed in a glazed vessel and covered with a marinade made of mulberry pulp boiled on a slow fire until reduced by half. This recipe had, by the way, a lot in common with the way the Romans stored mulberries, although Apicius recommended mixing the mulberry juice with boiled stum (*sapa*).[699] The technique of storing apples was similar to that of mulberries: apples were to be placed in a pot and covered with a grape pulp "the consistency of which has been made firm on slow fire and then cooled down." Apples could be stored this way for some time and, when finally taken out, were supposed to be as good "as if they were just harvested."[700]

There were few techniques for storing dates. Apparently, they were preferably stored dried. If, however, one wanted to hoard fresh fruits, it was enough to place them in a new pottery jar (*jurra*), seal its lid well, and bury the jar in the soil or immerse it in water. In the case of red, fresh dates (*balaḥ*), the fruit was to be soaked in trifoliate orange or lemon water. Unripe dates (*busr*) were stored in a vessel filled with bee honey.[701] Apart from instructions on how to store dates, a set of recommendations referring to these fruits includes also the recipes recommending how to

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[695] *Kanz*, 251, n. 719; 253–4, n. 723; 256, n. 729; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 29a, 29b.
[696] *Kanz*, 257, n. 733.
[697] Ibid., 257, n. 734.
[698] Ibid., 262–3, n. 750.
[699] Ibid., 258, n. 736; Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, XXII.
[700] *Kanz*, 258, n. 737; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 29a.
[701] *Kanz*, 259, n. 739; 262, n. 750.

revive dried dates. Sometimes it was enough to cook dates in skimmed milk and leave them in it for two days in order to make dates tastier and easier to chew. One could also leave dates immersed in fresh milk overnight, and put them in honey the next day. Treated this way, dried dates were supposedly to become undistinguishable from the fresh ones. But there were more artful methods, too. One of them, apparently imported from Iraq, consisted in soaking dates in hot water, drying them, and placing them inside a green melon (*baṭṭīkha*), the top of which was cut off and the pulp scooped out. After a day or two, when the dates soaked up and became tender, they were taken out, strained on a woven tray until dried, and served, arranged on plates and sprinkled with rose-water and sesame oil.[702]

The recipes dealing with figs also included advice how to restore dried fruit. However, there were no instructions for storing figs. Figs are particularly delicate and perish fast; their life could not apparently be prolonged by means other than drying. Once dried, however, they could be successfully subjected to various kinds of renewal. This could be done, for example, by leaving them soaked in water overnight. The next day, squeezed and gently strained, they were placed in a glazed vessel and covered with a thick marinade made of Swiss chard the leaves of which were crushed, squeezed, and cooked over a slow fire. One could also revive dried figs by arranging them, coated with saffronned honey, on the sieve placed over the pot of boiling water. The steam-cooked figs, left under a cover overnight, in the morning looked "as if just picked from the tree."[703]

Considering the abundance of fruits in Egypt, one would expect the local food culture to be inventive as far as processing of fruits is concerned. Studying the Cairene medieval cookery books in quest for fruity jams may, however, prove disappointing. Judging by this literature, such preparations were almost absent from the tables of the Cairenes, despite the Near Easterners' fondness for sweet-tasting nutrients. The local jams (*murabbā*) were, in fact, long-lasting marinades. "Jam" of dates (*ruṭab murabbā*), for example, was made of ripe dates, stuffed with almonds, arranged in a glass vessel, and covered with honey.[704] There was also a

[702] Ibid., 255, nn. 725–727; 259, nn. 738–40; recipes for refreshing and improving dates out of season are also included in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 88, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 105; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 432–3; *Wuṣla*, 653.

[703] *Kanz*, 256–7, nn. 731, 732.

[704] Ibid., 129, n. 341; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 433.

"jam" of roses (*ward murabbā*), made by leaving honey-covered roses in the sun for a few days.[705] But roses were not fruits. In fact, the only Arabic-Islamic examples of a preparation comparable to contemporary jams (or preserves made by boiling fruit with sugar to make an unfiltered jelly) were products made of dates and quinces. One of these were *ruṭab muʿassal*, or "honeyed dates." Stuffed with almonds and cooked in honey with rose-water and saffron, *ruṭab muʿassal* were meant be kept for winter and eaten "during the chilly period, when season for fresh dates is over."[706] In the cookbooks *ruṭab muʿassal*, similarly to *ruṭab murabbā*, or "date jam," are classified as sweets.

Unlike honeyed dates, Cairene quince preserves could not be considered sweets, although made by a similar technique. As their sweetness had sour-savory flavor, quince preserves were closer to fruit chutneys than to sweet jams. Due to their high pectin content, quinces, like grapes, are ideal for making preserves: when cooked, they would gel into a substance of relatively firm texture.[707] The Mediterranean-Near Eastern world knew of this property and used it to make preserves of both quinces and grapes. The mint-flavored grape preserve, however, made of cooked filtered pulp of unripe fruit (*ḥiṣrim*), must have had a jelly-like consistency.[708] The quince preserve was more like a confiture. The most widespread way of preparing quince consisted in cooking saffronned pieces of fruit in a mixture of vinegar and sugar molasses until the contents of the pot gained firm consistency.[709] To make the preparation richer, quinces could be cooked in honey or a sugar solution to which vinegar, spices, ground pistachios and almonds were added.[710]

In the Arabic culinary literature, such savory fruit condiments were generally classified as *mukhallāt* and *mamlūḥāt*, or vinegar and salty prep-

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[705] After the mixture had matured, it was seasoned with wine vinegar and mint; see *Kanz*, 276, n. 40.

[706] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 88, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 104–5; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 432; *Wuṣla*, 653; *Kanz*, 129, n. 340; 131, n. 346; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 22a. See also a recipe for *tumūr mulawwaza*, "almonded dates," in which dried dates, stuffed with pistachios or almonds, were boiled in a mixture of vinegar and honey; *Wuṣla*, 653; *Kanz*, 129, n. 342; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 22a. Cf. Apician recipe for *dulcia domestica*, in which dates, stuffed with nuts, pine nuts, or ground pepper, are sprinkled with salt and fried in honey; Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber septimus, XI/1.

[707] Shephard, *Pickled*, 166.

[708] *Kanz*, 65–6, nn. 152, 153, 154; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 14b.

[709] *Kanz*, 213, n. 595; the recipe is titled "popular way of preparing quince in vinegar" although vinegar, probably by mistake, is not mentioned in the recipe.

[710] Ibid., 213, nn. 592, 593; *Wuṣla*, 675–6.

arations. In practical terms, this means that raisins in vinegar and sugar or salted lemons in honey shared the chapter with pickled turnips, radishes, olives, capers, carrots, onions, eggplants, sparrows, and paste made of salt-fermented fish. Like other preparations included in this category, the medieval Arabic fruit pickles were served with the main course in form of side dishes, savories, and relishes. As condiments, they were supposed to contrast the food items they accompanied and to add new flavors to them. They were also to "cleanse the palate of greasiness, to appetize, to assist the digestion, and to stimulate the banqueter."[711]

Save few exceptions, preparing fruit condiments did not require the use of heat of a fire. In most cases, such condiments were made by pickling or marinating fruits in more or less sophisticated solutions or mixtures combining acidic, salty and sweet elements. In the context of medieval Cairo and its often kitchenless apartments,[712] it may mean that manufacturing this kind of preparations was one of the otherwise few culinary activities which could be undertaken in middle-class households. The recipes for fruity condiments differ significantly, ranging from the simplest, one-sentence instructions to rather sophisticated descriptions of dishes designed to satisfy the most refined needs of the urban elites. For instance, of four recipes for fruit marinades included in *Waṣf*, two instruct the reader to simply cover grapes or sorb-apples, with a mixture of water, vinegar, and honey, and leave them for some time to blend well.[713] The third recipe is also simple, yet more refined: washed and dried raisins, put in a glass jar, were to be sprinkled with ground cinnamon, mastic, powdered rosebuds, salt, and a spice mix (*afwāh aṭ-ṭīb*). After that, fresh mint leaves, seasoned with spices (*afwāh*), were put on the top and only then everything was covered with sharp vinegar.[714] The fourth recipe, titled "description of mustard" (*ṣifat khardal*) is not only sophisticated and refined, but also quite unusual and intriguingly similar to traditional Italian *mostarda di frutta di Cremona*. It describes a fish sauce which consisted of whole jujubes and raisins pickled in a marinade made of pounded mustard seeds which were macerated in vinegar, filtered, mixed with syrup, and

[711] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 77, cf. translation by Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 86.
[712] On the presumed absence of kitchens in Cairene middle-class houses and apartments see above, pt. I, chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," pp. 88–95, 99–100.
[713] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 397.
[714] Ibid., 395.

subsequently enriched with a rich spice mixture (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*), saffron and almonds.[715]

As far as pickling of raisins is concerned, *Wuṣla* recommends yet another way. According to a recipe included in this book, raisins were to be mixed with mint leaves and, once in a pickling jar, covered with a marinade made of pounded raisins, mint, wine vinegar, honey (or sugar or *dibs*), spices (*aṭrāf*), and ginger.[716] The collection of recipes for fruit pickles and marinades included in *Wuṣla* is, in fact, much wider. However, many of these recipes, such as those for lemon, quince and trifoliate orange (*kubbād*) preparations, are almost identical with recipes included in *Kanz*.[717] The same refers to recipes for pickled fruits as included in Ibn Mubārak Shāh's *Zahr*.[718]

Kanz contains over twenty recipes for fruit pickles and marinades that can probably satisfy even the most demanding lover of these kinds of dishes. The collection includes five recipes for quince, four for trifoliate orange, one for citron, and nine for lemon pickles. Two preparations are made with green walnuts.[719] Of the five recipes for quince pickles, three are actually recipes for cooked, chutney-like preserves which were mentioned above.[720] The remaining two were prepared cold by covering the pieces of peeled and saffronned quince with a marinade made of raisins, vinegar, sugar, spices (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*), mint, soft nuts, musk, and rose-water.[721] Trifoliate oranges, a small and very bitter fruit known in Arabic as *kubbād*, are not edible fresh. The Cairene cooks applied a number of methods to make the fruit suitable for consumption. One of the most refined recipes involved placing pieces of the peeled *kubbād* in a vessel and covering them with a warm marinade made of sweetened wine vinegar, toasted crushed hazelnuts, spices (*aṭrāf*), mint, and pieces of fried peel of the fruit itself. A few days of blending were enough to counter the bitterness of *kubbād* and make an interesting condiment of it. A salty version was

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[715] "Description of mustard" (*ṣifat khardal*), in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 407–8; *Kanz*, 183, n. 496. See also similar recipe in *Kanz*, 178, n. 481, which is black raisin pickle. For more details on "description of mustard" see below, chapter II.9.F. "Prepared condiments," p. 345.

[716] The condiment was ready to eat after six-seven days; *Wuṣla*, 682–3.

[717] Ibid., 673–676, 682–3, 686, 689–90.

[718] See Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 28a (trifoliate orange, citron); fols. 28b–29a (lemons); fol. 31 (raisins in vinegar).

[719] See *Kanz*, 195–218 and 278–9, n. 46; 278, n. 47.

[720] See above, pp. 276, 278.

[721] *Kanz*, 213, n. 594; 279, n. 47; see also a recipe included in the chapter on *ashriba* in ibid., 135, n. 539.

made by seasoning the pieces of fruits with a mixture of salt and saffron and covering them with *kubbād* juice, also saffronned and salted. To make the pickle more aromatic, one could season it with a mixture of ground toasted caraway seeds, salt, ginger, cloves, rosebuds, and rue.[722]

Of all the fruit condiments which were made in medieval Cairo, the most distinctive and unique were, however, pickles made of salted lemon. Salted lemons are still consumed and appreciated nowadays as an indispensable element of the Near Eastern and North African menu. In the Middle Ages they clearly were as popular. According to one author, salted lemons "were so well known that it was not necessary to explain how to make them."[723] Unwilling as he was to discuss something so ordinary and commonplace too exhaustively, he nevertheless decided to include four recipes for salted lemon pickles in his work. These were seemingly copied later by other compilers.[724] It seems that one of the most typical medieval Cairene ways to prepare lemons was to stuff the fruit (probably cut lengthwise) with salt, press them together in a vessel (*zubdiyya*), sprinkle them with salt, and leave them for two nights to soften. After that the fruit was covered with lemon juice mixed with a handful of rue, bee honey, oil, and saffron.[725] Most of the contemporary recipes for salted lemons do not call for any additional seasonings or sweeteners.[726] What is appreciated today would not necessarily satisfy the medieval, spice-loving palates. True, one medieval recipe called for an extremely modest brine made of salt and lemon juice only. But salted lemons, if prepared in this simplest of ways, were unlikely to be consumed in such a non-aromatized form. Rather, they were adjusted to actual flavor standards by marinating pickled fruits in a mixture made of lemon or bitter orange (*nāranj*) juice, spices (*aṭrāf ṭīb*), toasted coriander seeds, minced parsley, mint, rue,

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[722] Ibid., 207–8, nn. 576, 577, 578.

[723] *Wuṣla*, 673; trans. in Rodinson, "Studies," 144, n. 1.

[724] As indicated earlier, the recipes for salted lemons as included in *Wuṣla* are almost identical with the appropriate recipes contained in *Kanz* (217–18; 278–9). However, the phrasing of the *Wuṣla* recipes is clearly more accurate, which seems to indicate they were probably the originals copied to *Kanz*, and not vice versa. The three recipes for salted lemon as included in Ibn Mubārak Shāh's *Zahr* (fols. 28b–29a) seem to have been copied from *Kanz*.

[725] *Kanz*, 217, n. 607.

[726] Although some Moroccan variations allow one to add certain spices; cf. Roden, *New Book*, 459.

and ginger. Or, in a simpler version, by covering salted lemons with wine vinegar mixed with honey and olive oil.[727]

Fresh, dried, marinated, pickled, and preserved fruit—eaten on their own as appetizers, snacks, condiments, or palate cleansers—were not the only forms of fruits consumed by medieval Cairenes. Fruits could be also used as ingredients in various cooked preparations. The most apparent evidence of this has been preserved in a number of dishes' names, such as *tamariyya* ("dried date dish"), *laymūniyya* ("lemon dish"), *tamarhindiyya* ("tamarind dish"), *zabībiyya* ("raisin dish"), *rummāniyya* ("pomegranate dish"), *mawziyya* ("banana dish"), *ʿunnābiyya* ("jujube dish"), *ruṭabiyya* ("fresh date dish"), *nāranjiyya* ("bitter orange dish"), *mishmishiyya* ("apricot dish"), *safarjaliyya* ("quince dish"), *tuffāḥiyya* ("apple dish"), *khūkhiyya* ("peach dish"), and *ḥiṣrimiyya* ("unripe grape dish").[728] Confusingly enough, the names given to certain Arabic-Islamic preparations after their fruit ingredients do not indicate fruit preparations. In these dishes—all of them usually being rich, fatty, meat or chicken stews made in the *Eintopf* style—the function of fruits was limited to that of food additives.[729] This also refers to a dish known in English as "a bowl of pomegranate seeds, with almonds and sugar," that was served by a Damascene street cook in one of the *Arabian Nights*' stories and that, against the appearances, was not a fruity dessert but a regular, chicken or meat course (*ḥabb rummān*, *ṭabīkh ḥabb rummān* or "pomegranate dish").[730] The role of primary ingredients that fruits could play in side dishes was not possible in the "main courses." In the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture, the true, regular plate was supposed to contain meat.[731]

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[727] *Kanz*, 218, n. 609; 217, nn. 604, 606. Of the remaining salted lemon recipes the most sophisticated one describes a marinade made of squeezed lemon juice mixed with sugar, chopped nuts, ginger, cardamom, betel (*Piper betle*, *tanbūl*; "T-N-B-L" in the recipe, which may also be a misspelled form of *sunbul*, or nard), mint, rue, a dash of toasted caraway and some good nut oil, wine vinegar, and, optionally, honey or *dibs* (date paste); *Kanz*, 211, n. 587.

[728] Or, according to another system of naming, *ṭabīkh tamar hindī*, *ṭabīkh safarjal*, *ṭabīkh nāranj*, etc. Sometimes the dishes are not individually named but are included in appropriate sections (*faṣl*), such as "section on sour grapes" (*Wuṣla*, 582–4), "section on quince" (*Wuṣla*, 602–3), or "section on apples" (*Wuṣla*, 603–4).

[729] Just as was the case with dishes named after particular vegetables; see above, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," p. 253.

[730] "The Story of Wazīr Nūr ad-Dīn and His Brother Shams ad-Dīn," Night 23.

[731] For the role of meat in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 61–4; and chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 173–6.

In some cases, the name was only a matter of color—as with *mishmishiyya*, "apricot dish" without apricots, the saffronborn yellowness of which was strong enough to remind one of apricots.[732] In most cases, however, the fruity names simply pointed to the fact that a given fruit—and not another one—was added to the meat or chicken stew. Usually, the particular qualities of the fruit used (such as nuances of its delicate aroma, texture, color, or shape) did not really matter. In most of the discussed dishes, the eponymous fruit, processed into juice or pulp, was used because of the acid and/or sugar it contained.[733] But it could not be otherwise—of all the fruits' attributes it was only the sourness and sweetness that could successfully withstand the power of the ingredients which were usually added to a given fruity stew. In "apple dish" (*tuffāḥiyya*), for example, the flavor of sour apple juice (obtained by peeling the fruit, cleaning them of seeds, and pounding them in a stone mortar) was to compete with tastes, smells and textures of cooked fat meat, salt, coriander, onions, Chinese cinnamon, pepper, mastic, ginger, mint, and almonds. One could also add some garlic, provided that the dish was not made of chicken.[734] But such was the poetics of the Arabic-Islamic medieval cuisine.

This cuisine, while valuing the sourness and sweetness of some fruits, generally did not care much for fruits which were not clearly sour or sufficiently sweet. Recipes for dishes such as *mawziyya*, "banana dish" in which pieces of bananas were put on the top of the already cooked nutty meat stew,[735] or for some *jawādhib* puddings in which fried bananas or melons, immersed in syrup and coated in pounded sugar, were arranged in a baking vessel between two layers of thin bread, were quite rare in the Arabic-Islamic culinary literature.[736] Even more rare, and also curious, was a "dish of fenugreek" (*ṭabīkh al-ḥulba*), in which fenugreek seeds, left in the pot over the glowing embers overnight, were in the morning mixed with spices, honey, butter, raisins, and figs cut into two or three

[732] See, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 343; although there were also versions with apricots, such as that described in ibid., 356.
[733] Of course, souring a stew with lemon or verjuice did not rule out seasoning it with vinegar; similarly, adding dates to a dish did not exclude sweetening it with sugar or honey anyway.
[734] See *Kanz*, 57, n. 138.
[735] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 356; *Wuṣla*, 612–13; also *Kanz*, 24–5, n. 34 although, apparently due to the scribal error, the latter recipe misses the sentence on adding bananas.
[736] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 411.

parts.[737] These were, by the way, the only examples of dishes which did not demand processing fruit into pulp or juice.

The short list of fruity dishes in which fruits were used for their particular flavor involved also a collection of stews which constituted a true curiosity in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture. The stews, made by cooking fried chicken in a sweet spicy fruity pulp, were called *khūkhiyya* ("peach dish"), *tūt Shāmī bi-dajāj* ("Syrian mulberry with chicken"), *qarāṣiyā baladiyya* ("sorb-apples country style"), or *khūkh dibb* ("bear plum dish").[738] For the time being, it is impossible to confirm whether this kind of preparations was eaten in medieval Cairo at all. With *Wuṣla* being the only cookery book to describe the sweet fruity chicken stews, the clues are not too numerous. One of the very few may be related to the presumed Syrian provenience of predominant parts of *Wuṣla*.[739] The fact that the Syrian cookery book included recipes for chicken cooked in sweet fruity pulps, while its Cairene counterparts generally did not,[740] makes it is very tempting to conclude that the compilers of the Cairene cookbooks realized that nobody in Cairo would care for such preparations. After all, the Egyptians, otherwise very fond of sweet chicken dishes, traditionally preferred them to be made with nuts and seeds.[741]

As far as the sweet part of the Cairene menu is concerned, the Arabic-Islamic cuisine seems to have followed some unwritten rule which generally forbade adding fruits to sweets. True, the Cairenes could relish honeyed dates or bananas dipped in molasses.[742] But a prepared sweet-

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[737] See ibid., 381.

[738] See *Wuṣla*, 545–46. The rule was to put scalded or macerated fruits through a sieve and boil the fruity purée with sugar. When the cauldron's contents thickened, mint, some spices, and fried chicken were added into it.

As for the term "*khūkh*," which in classical Arabic means "peach," its medieval Near Eastern designation was somewhat confusing. As al-Baghdādī observed, "a small acid plum" known in Egypt as *qarāṣiyā* (that is sorb-apples, *Pirus sorbus* Gaertn. or *Sorbus domestica*, the service tree), was "precisely the same thing as that called in Damascus *khūkh ad-dibb*" (that is "bear plum"). At the same time, what in Egypt was called *ijāṣ* (that is plums, probably *Prunus armeniaca* L. or *Prunus domestica* L.), in Syria was known as "*khūkh*," while the "*khūkh*" was called "*durrāqinā*;" see al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 77 (fol. 19*r*).

[739] See above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 1. "Cookery books," p. 38.

[740] The exception was Ibn Mubārak Shāh, who copied two of these recipes (for mulberry dish and sorb-apple dish) into his *Zahr*; see Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 34b.

[741] See above, chapter II.3. "Fowls and eggs," pp. 205–6.

[742] *Wuṣla*, 612, includes also (among meat dishes) an interesting recipe for bananas fried in syrup and sprinkled with pistachios. It is difficult to say, however, whether sweet fried

meat made, for example, of oranges, apples or apricots was clearly out of the question.[743] Charles Perry is of the opinion that this was so because "the medieval Arab taste disliked any sourness in sweetmeats." Or, in other words, that "the combination of sweet and sour flavors was considered appropriate with meat but not in a free-standing confection."[744] The observation is doubtlessly correct. Indeed, medieval Arab taste generally welcomed the sweet-sour flavor and loved honey or sugar to be countered by lemon or sour apple pulp. This predilection was justified and recommended by the prevailing medical doctrine. According to Arabic-Islamic criteria, a preparation containing such a combination could not, however, be called "a sweet," because the inclusion of sour ingredient simply disqualified it as such. In other words, the medieval Arab sweetmeat meant a sweet preparation to which no sour ingredient whatsoever was added.[745] Naturally enough, most fruits had to be excluded from this category.[746]

The restriction, however, did not concern dates. With sugar content equal of 63 grams per 100 grams of dried fruit, and vitamin C at ca. 0.4 milligram, the date could be used as cooking ingredient the way no other fruit

bananas were as popular as those which were not fried but simply dipped in molasses or syrup.

[743] Preparation such as dried melons cooked in syrup and scented with rose-water and musk was an exception among the Arabic-Islamic sweets; see *Kanz*, 127–8, n. 336; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 21b.

[744] Perry, "Thousand and One Fritters'," 493 and idem, "Familiar Foods," 283 respectively. Perry's argument made him suspect that the so-called "lemon loaves" (*aqrāṣ laymūniyya*), or sweets mentioned in the *Arabian Nights*, could not have been sweets seasoned with lemon juice but, rather, were loaves of almond paste flavored with lemon peel. In fact, the recipes for *aqrāṣ laymūniyya* that are included in *Kanz* and that Perry had no chance to consult, indicate that "lemon loaves" had had even less to do with lemon than Perry suspected. Like *mishmishiyya*, a saffron-dyed, almond-and-sugar "apricot dish" which had nothing to do with apricots (*Kanz*, 37, n. 73), "lemon loaves" were not made of lemon at all. Two of the *Kanz* recipes for *aqrāṣ laymūniyya* describe a kind of caramel candies made in form of round slices; see *Kanz*, 104, n. 266; 132, n. 349. Actually, the third recipe for "lemon loaves" does call for lemon juice. However, in accordance with the rule which excluded sourness from sweetmeats, the "lemon loaves" made of cooked sugar and lemon juice could not be sweetmeats. In *Kanz*, this recipe is included in the chapter dealing with electuaries (*Jawārishnāt wa-l-maʿājin wa-l-ashriba*...); *Kanz*, 138, n. 370.

[745] *Tumūr mulawwaza*, or "almonded dates," may have been an exception to the rule—it was a sweet made of dried dates which, stuffed with pistachios or almonds, were boiled in a mixture of vinegar and honey. More probably, however, the recipe was either mistakenly placed in the chapters dealing with sweets, or the letter "ḥ" was mistakenly dotted, which resulted in that the recipe called for "*khall*," "vinegar" (*Kanz*, 129, n. 342; *Wuṣla* 653), instead for "*ḥall*," "solution" (as it is in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 22a).

[746] Although al-Warrāq, in his *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 253–4 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 397), gives two recipes for sweet *khabīṣ*-type puddings made of dried and ground Syrian apples.

was used in the Arabic-Islamic medieval cuisine. In practical terms this meant that dates, being basically devoid of sourness, were not only added to meat stews[747] but were also readily used in various sweets and sweet preparations. Moreover, due to the extremely high sugar content, they could be easily transformed into preserves, both cooked and uncooked.

Naturally enough, most of the date dishes which can be found in the medieval *haute cuisine* manuals were items which originated in a very simple country or desert environment.[748] The process of "civilizing" them started as soon as they were brought to the newly established urban centers of the Arabic-Islamic world. It was there that they fell into the hands of cultured and creative chefs who immediately veiled the Bedouin roots of date dishes with musk, rose-water, nuts, and saffron. This was, doubtlessly, the case of *ḥays*, a sweetmeat made of finely pounded dry bread macerated in date paste to which pounded walnuts, almonds, pistachios, and toasted sesame seeds were added. The sweet mass, mixed with warm sesame oil, was then formed into meatballs and sprinkled with pounded sugar. The dish, described in a number of the Arabic-Islamic cookery books, was recommended as "convenient for travellers."[749] *Ḥalāwa min at-tamar*, or "date sweet" made of dried dates which were processed into a thick puree and mixed with honey, clarified butter, hazelnuts, almonds, musk, and rose-water must have originally been a desert specialty, too. The same refers to a variety of this dish that was prepared of pitted dates cooked in melted tail fat into a thick pulp, to which almonds and poppy seeds were added. Upon serving, the preparation was sprinkled with pistachios, white sugar, musk, and rose-water.[750] Of all the date dishes, date

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[747] Dates were added to stews such as *tamariyya* ("dried dates dish"), *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 353, 365; *Kanz*, 23, n. 29; 268, n. 12; 272, n. 25; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 30a; *ruṭabiyya* ("fresh dates dish"), in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 64, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 65; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 353; *Wuṣla*, 613; *Kanz*, 22, n. 28; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 7b; *maʿshūqa*, in *Wuṣla*, 609; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 36a (recipes for *maʿshūqa* as included in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 315, and *Kanz*, 236, n. 668, refer to quite different preparations and do not call for dates).

[748] Cf. Rodinson, "Studies," 151–2.

[749] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 88, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 105; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 435; *Kanz*, 130, n. 343. Cf. descriptions of "*ḥays*" quoted in Lane, *Lexicon*, II, 686 and in al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, I, 488.

[750] For recipes see *Kanz*, 130, n. 344; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 21b; for many other sweet date preparations see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 413, 417, 425, 455; *Wuṣla*, 623, 639; *Kanz*, 121, n. 321; 127, n. 334; 128, n. 338; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 21b, 22a.

jawādhib pudding was probably the most refined. To make this dish, one had to mix the date pulp with sugar, honey, saffron, bread crumbs, sesame oil, and, optionally, with poppy seeds and pistachios. The paste was subsequently placed between two layers of pounded sugar, and baked in the oven under a roasting chicken or meat which soaked the "pudding" with its fat and juices.[751]

Whatever the true origins of date *harīsa* (*harīsat at-tamar*), it gained a very urban character in medieval Cairo, or, more precisely, a street character for it apparently remained an exclusively bazaar dish and failed to reach the tables of the city's elite. The dish itself is as interesting as it is mysterious. The cookery books which survived till our times contain no recipe for date *harīsa*. At the same time, looking for possible clues in the recipes describing other varieties of *harīsa* does not solve the problem, if only because there was no general and binding pattern regarding *harīsa*-making techniques or the use of ingredients.[752] The only source to allude to date *harīsa* at all is the market inspector's manual written in the eighth/fourteenth-century Cairo by Ibn Bassām. However, the appropriate fragment, contained in the chapter titled "On date *harīsas* and cooked lentils," does not discuss the method of preparation or the ingredients of the dish. All it says is that the dish was sold by specialized bazaar cooks who employed a variety of measures in order to adulterate the food they prepared. Their cheating involved stinting on dates, throwing date pits gathered from garbage into the cauldron, or adding *naṭrūn*,[753] white cumin,

[751] See *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 412; *Wuṣla*, 635.

[752] In theory, the making of any *harīsa* implied applying "*hars*," or "pounding"—hence the name—a particular technique that consisted, generally speaking, in beating the cauldron's contents until it set in a smooth paste. Recipes for pistachio *harīsa*, however, are not univocal in this respect. Most of them (two in *Waṣf*, 427, 459; one in *Kanz*, 112, n. 291; two in *Wuṣla*, 623, 647) do not mention the operation of beating. One recipe (in *Wuṣla*, 621–2) indicates that beating could actually be done. Another major problem is the question of ingredients. "Regular" *harīsas* were preparations made of meat or chicken and wheat grains, while pistachio *harīsa* was a very sweet chicken dish in which pistachio nuts and bread crumbs, basted with julep and honey, replaced the wheat grains. According to one recipe, however, *harīsa* could be also a non-meat preparation, made of pistachio nuts, starch, sugar, honey, and rose-water (*Wuṣla*, 623).

[753] Natron is a naturally occurring mixture of hydrated sodium carbonate (soda ash), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), and small quantities of sodium chloride (household salt). Natron deposits occur naturally as a part of saline lake beds in Wādī Naṭrūn in Egypt; cf. Kurlansky, *Salt*, 41–2, 49–50; Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 41–2.

or peels of green nuts in order to dye the preparation or, more precisely, to intensify its redness.[754]

As all those comments suggest, date *harīsa* could not be too refined a dish. Most probably, it was a meatless preparation of a rather inferior status, in which mashed dates were the primary and, apparently, the most valuable ingredient. It is possible that its contents was enriched with pounded wheat grains (as in regular, meat/chicken *harīsas*) or bread crumbs (as in many other date dishes), some kind of cheaper oil and, perhaps, some additional cheap sweetener, such as sugar molasses. Occasional addition of some rose-water was not impossible in this kind of offer.

Considering the extreme sweetness of date dishes and their caloric value (a 100 grams portion of dried dates alone supplies 270 kilocalories/1130 kilojoules of energy), it is hardly possible to imagine that they could be consumed in the Near Eastern climate. It should be remembered, however, that these preparations were not served as the main course plates in the heat of the summer midday. Energizing and warming as they were, they must have been a blessing during the cold desert nights and during the chilly winter weather which bothered the Cairenes so much. If eaten in summer, dates, both fresh and dried, were the best when simply arranged in a jar and covered with crushed ice. This was the way the caliph al-Maʾmūn preferred them to be served.[755]

8. Nuts and Seeds

In the culinary sense, a nut is any hard, oily, edible, and shelled plant product. The term "nut" is sometimes used for seeds, but nuts and seeds are not the same: a nut is a seed, but not all seeds are nuts. A seed comes from fruit and can be removed from the fruit, while a nut is a compound ovary that is both the seed and the fruit, which cannot be separated. Although in the botanical sense almonds and pistachios are not nuts but seeds of drupes, the culinary definition of nut, being much less restrictive, allows them to be regarded as nuts.[756] In the Arabic cuisine of the medieval Near East, both nuts and seeds were used as cooking ingredients. Compared

[754] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 50. One wonders what was the reason behind "recycling" the date pits. Were they to increase the volume of the cauldron's contents or to imitate some proper but too expensive ingredient, such as nuts?

[755] *Kanz*, 259, n. 740.

[756] Cf. McGee, *Food and Cooking*, 501–2; Davidson, *Oxford Companion to Food*, entry "Nuts."

to nuts, however, the role of seeds was marginal. Nuts—among which almonds and pistachios enjoyed particular favor—were more delicate, softer and, in their crushed form, more efficient as thickening agents.[757] As such, they were more universal, more important and more sought after. Actually, nuts were the signature ingredients of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine, while the culinary use of seeds was almost exclusively restricted to sweet preparations.[758]

As for Egyptian culinary culture, nuts were not a traditional item. In the Graeco-Roman times, the presence of nuts in the local menu was limited to almonds, which were believed to neutralize alcohol and which were eaten as appetizers.[759] An increase in nut consumption in Egypt occurred only some time after the Arab conquest or, more precisely, after significant numbers of foreign migrants had settled in al-Fusṭāṭ. In this context, Syrians, Iraqis, and Iranians must have played the key role, because in their diet nuts were an indispensable ingredient. Since, however, nuts were not grown in Egypt, apart from some almond trees, the new settlers' predilection had to be satisfied with imported goods, mostly Syrian.[760] An increased interest in nuts, presumably prompted by foreign residents, was soon encouraged by the arrival of the nut-promoting new wave cuisine from Baghdad.

Conforming to the new culinary standards, Cairenes automatically followed the fashion for universal and liberal use of nuts. But they also proved to have their particular preferences in this respect. For some reasons, almonds (*lawz*), clearly favored in Baghdadi recipes, were often replaced with pistachio nuts (*fustuq*) in medieval Cairo. This seems to have been a very particular feature of the local cuisine and, for an Iraqi

[757] Since the main idea behind the use of nuts in the Arabic-Islamic cookery was to thicken the cooked dish, nuts were always crushed (almonds had to be blanched and peeled of husk first) before being thrown to the pot.

[758] Although some seeds, particularly purslane seeds (*bizr rijla*) were appreciated for their presumed therapeutic values; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 43; for the use of purslane seeds as antidotes for plague see, for example, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XIV, 340; Ibn Iyās, *Badaʾiʿ*, I/2, 689; II, 6.

[759] Darby, *Food*, II, 752.

[760] Actually, certain confusion exists over the history of the almond tree (*Amygdalus communis*) in Egypt. Some argue that it was one of the principal trees in ancient Egypt, while others maintain it was unknown there before the Roman period. Indeed, no ancient Egyptian name for almond is known. Moreover, the existing evidence indicates that almond tree has never been widely grown in the Nile valley; see Darby, *Food*, II, 751–2. For almonds grown in medieval Egypt see al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 79 (fol. 19*l*); for nuts imported to Egypt see al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83. Also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 246; idem, *Economic Foundations*, 121.

observer, a surprising one—ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, who visited Egypt at the end of the sixth/twelfth century, was quite astonished to notice that "very often, in their stews and sweets, they use pistachios in place of almonds."[761] Actually, the origins of the Cairenes' predilection for pistachio nuts are not clear. The delicate taste, the softness, the unique greenish shade, or the particularly easy use (when the fruit ripens, the shells split partially open)—any of these could have been a good reason to prefer pistachios to almonds. Moreover, the prevailing medical tradition might have also contributed to the popularity of pistachio nuts, which were recommended as "resolving obstruction of the liver" and placed in a position superior to other nuts (generally considered unhealthy).[762]

The vogue for pistachios seems to have started in the unique milieu of the Fatimid court, probably some time before the sixth/twelfth century. During the reign of the caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh (495–524/1101–1130), pistachio nuts were already consumed in huge quantities in the caliphal palace. Moreover, pistachios seem to have become an object of an alimentary fad of the Fatimid elites.[763] Although generally available from the markets of al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo, in Fatimid times the consumption of pistachio nuts could not be an excessively common phenomenon. The relatively high price of imported pistachios[764] must have significantly limited the access of ordinary people to this kind of nuts.

This changed, apparently, only after the fall of the Fatimid regime. This event seems to have brought about two developments which made pistachios lose their elite status and, in effect, appear on the tables of ordinary Cairenes. First, the Cairene pistachio dealers, having lost their main customer as a result of the Saladin's coup, had to bring down the price

[761] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 193 (fol. 48*r*).

[762] See al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 318–22; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XI, 92; also al-Baghdādī, who repeats that pistachio nut "resolves obstruction of the liver;" al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 193 (fol. 48*r*).

[763] In the early sixth/twelfth century pistachios suddenly became scarce in Cairo, possibly due to a crop failure or some trade disorder between Syria and Egypt. In effect, their price rose considerably, so much so that one could get only 1.5 *raṭls* (ca. 675 grams) of nuts for a dinar. One of the results of this development was that an argument broke out among a number of high Fatimid state officials, some of whom complained about the situation. Recorded by Ibn al-Maʾmūn al-Baṭāʾiḥī, a vizier of the caliph al-Āmir bi-Aḥkām Allāh, the text of the dispute contains unique information regarding the importance of pistachios in the culinary culture of the Fatimid court; see Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 92–3.

[764] See *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 55, where it is reported that in the mid-fifth/eleventh-century al-Fusṭāṭ pistachios were more expensive than almonds. The huge purchases made by the supply services of the Fatimid palace must have additionally contributed to inflating the price of pistachio nuts in Cairo.

of their merchandise. Second, significant amounts of pistachios, which had possibly been hoarded in the caliphal storerooms, became disowned when left by the Fatimids. Disregarded by Saladin's soldiers, they were now at the disposal of the former regime cooks who, having left the palaces, moved to the city streets to earn their living by cooking for ordinary people.[765] Naturally enough, they cooked the preparations they knew and of ingredients they had at hand. This might have been why pistachio nuts landed in the cauldrons of the city street cooks. Whether this is how it in fact happened remains an open question.

All in all, a few decades later the predilection for pistachio nuts was already a noticeable phenomenon among the Cairenes who, in their stews and sweets, tended to use "pistachios in place of almonds."[766] The culinary literature confirms the reliability of what ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī observed during his stay in Egypt. Indeed, the cookbooks of Egyptian provenience include a number of recipes in which the traditional almond ingredient was replaced with pistachios. Such is, for example, the case of *rummāniyya*, a sour meat pomegranate stew thickened with pounded pistachios;[767] the same refers to dates which in Egypt were stuffed with pistachio nuts, instead of traditional almonds.[768] The most remarkable, however, was the idea of replacing almonds with pistachios where almonds seemed to be irreplaceable: in the sweetmeat popularly known as marzipan. As one can expect, putting the idea into practice resulted in the invention of pistachio marzipan.[769]

But the Cairene cooks and food dealers did not only experiment with using pistachios in place of almonds. Judging by the recipes, they also created new dishes which had no prototype in the Baghdadi cuisine. The Egyptian cookbooks, unlike Iraqi ones, include preparations such as *nāranjiyya*,[770] a dish in which meatballs, shaped in the form of bitter oranges (*nāranj*) were stuffed with pistachios, or "Jewish meatballs," which were meatballs made of pounded meat, pistachios, eggs, and spices.[771]

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[765] See above, chapter I.2. "High and low cooking: exchange and diffusion," pp. 86–8.

[766] See above, p. 288, n. 761.

[767] For the recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 307, 311; *Kanz*, 15, n. 10; 29, n. 49; 275, n. 35; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 5b.

[768] See recipes for *tumūr mulawwaza* or "almonded dates," in *Wuṣla*, 653; *Kanz*, 129, n. 342; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 22a.

[769] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 419.

[770] For recipes see, for example, ibid., 319; *Kanz*, 19, n. 20; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 6b.

[771] For recipe for "Jewish meatballs" see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 379.

Fusṭuqiyya, a "pistachio dish" in the form of sour meat or chicken stew thickened with pounded pistachios, is not to be found in the Iraqi cookbooks, either.[772] What particularly astonished ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī was a local specialty called *harīsat al-fusṭuq* or "pistachio porridge." Indeed, the dish was unique and compared to nothing this author could know from Baghdad, his home town. The existing recipes for the dish (there are ca. six of them) vary as far as both the technique and ingredients are concerned, and it is impossible to say which of the versions was the most commonly eaten in medieval Cairo.[773] According to al-Baghdādī, whose eyewitness description may be much closer to reality than what the theoretical records say, pistachio *harīsa* was a "delicious and greasy" sweet dish the ingredients of which included "one part of cooked chopped chicken meat, two parts of julep, and one eighth or one ninth part of peeled and crushed pistachios." To prepare the dish one had to cook pieces of chicken in sesame oil, place them in the pot and, after short cooking, cover them with julep. After that, pistachios were thrown in and the preparation was beaten until well mixed, and taken up from the fire.[774]

The Cairenes' special fondness for pistachios and the fact that they sometimes replaced almonds with them did not mean that almonds were excluded from the Cairene menu. On the contrary, almonds apparently could not be removed from some categories of dishes, such as non-sour

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[772] For recipes for sour-sweet *fusṭuqiyya* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 311; *Kanz*, 17, n. 15; 32, n. 60; 36, n. 68); *fusṭuqiyya* included in al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 67, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 68–9 is a sweet chicken dish (copied in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 355; cf. a recipe for *fusṭuqiyya* in ibid., 329). For a more detailed discussion of sweet nutty/seedy chicken stews see above, chapter II.3. "Fowls and eggs," pp. 204–6.

[773] For the recipes for *harīsat al-fusṭuq* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 427, 459; *Kanz*, 112, n. 291; *Wuṣla*, 621–3, 647; Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 37a.

[774] Generally, the cookbooks version of pistachio *harīsa* described a dish which was made of dried bread crumbs, fried in sesame oil, and mixed with chicken breasts and pistachio nuts. The mixture was then cooked in julep and honey. According to one recipe, however, it could be also a non-meat, pistachio-starch-sugar-honey-rose-water preparation (*Wuṣla*, 623). A majority of recipes for pistachio *harīsa* do not recommend to "beat," or "pound" (ar. *harasa*) the preparation, a procedure which was actually basic for the process of preparing regular, meat-and-wheat *harīsa*. Undertaken only after the preparation had matured and softened in the oven for a night, it consisted in beating the cauldron's contents until made into a smooth paste (see above, chapter II.2. Meat, p. 197; cf. also chapter II.7. "Fruits," pp. 285–6, where the date *harīsa* is discussed). ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī observed that the pounding was actually done in the process of preparing the dish (though he uses the word *ḍaraba*, and not *harasa*, to designate the work), which disagrees with the instructions given in the recipes; see al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 193–5 (fol. 48*r*–48*l*). Al-Baghdādī's description of *harīsat al-fusṭuq* is, by the way, very similar to one of the recipes for the dish included in *Wuṣla*, 621–2.

stews, fried dishes, or *khabīṣ*-type puddings, and replacing them with pistachios was, for some reasons, out of the question. Moreover, almonds successfully competed with pistachios in sour meat stews, sweets, and pastries. Apart from that, the two kinds of nuts were often used together, as in the case of some *jawādhib*-type puddings, some fried dishes, in various kinds of lamb or chicken stuffings, and, above all, in many sweet preparations.

Almonds and pistachios were not the only kinds of nuts used in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine. Walnuts (*jawz*) and hazelnuts (*bunduq*) were consumed, too, but their share in the diet of the Egyptians seems to have been marginal. Hazelnuts, defined by the dieticians as particularly harmful and detrimental to the stomach,[775] were only occasionally added to sour dishes, chicken stuffings, chicken dishes, or fish. Walnuts, considered slightly less detrimental, were used slightly more frequently, particularly as an ingredient of fish sauces and fish stuffings. When picked green and unripe, walnuts, similarly to almonds, could be pickled in a mixture of sharp vinegar, spices (*abzār*), garlic, mint, and celery.[776] From time to time, almonds, pistachios, and walnuts were used all together, as in the case of stuffing for chicken, lamb, or fried eggplants. In such cases, the nutty filling was usually flavored with coriander, mastic, sumac, pepper, caraway, cinnamon, etc, and olive oil.[777]

In sweetmeats, walnuts were not used. This category of food was almost entirely dominated by almonds and pistachios, both of which became items of strategic importance for Cairene confectioners. With "fruity" fruits excluded from the Arabic-Islamic sweetmeats, the sweet-makers could use nuts and seeds without restraint. Such nutty sweets, known from many of the *Arabian Nights* stories as well as from the cookery books, in medieval Cairo were made and sold particularly in the vicinity of the Zuwayla Gate.[778] The most famous of these sweetmeats included preparations such as *lawzīnaj* and *fālūdhaj*, classical marzipan products, as well as *khushkanān* and *basandūd*, biscuits the dough of which contained crushed almonds.[779] There were also *qaṭāʾif*, pancakes folded around a sweet nutty

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775 See, for example, al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 320.

776 Before immersing them in the pickling marinade, walnuts should have been densely pricked with a needle; see *Wuṣla*, 686. Cf. recipes for green walnut pickles in *Kanz*, 207, n. 575; 212, n. 590; 280, n. 50.

777 For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 374–5, 387.

778 For more on the place see below, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," pp. 301, 311–2.

779 For *khushkanān* and *basandūd* see also above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," p. 165.

filling made of ground almonds or pistachios kneaded with sesame oil, sugar, and flour,[780] and *nawāṭif*, popular sweets made of honey or thickened sugar solution kneaded with either toasted chickpeas, walnuts, pistachios, almonds, sesame or poppy seeds.[781] And there were *qāhiriyya* biscuits, named after the Abbasid caliph al-Qāhir bi-Allāh (d. 322/934) who reportedly invented them.

In sweet preparations, nuts were sometimes strengthened with seeds. For example, in some versions of *jawādhib al-khashkhāsh*, a "poppy seed pudding," pistachios were mixed with poppy seeds,[782] while in *asyūṭiyya*, a *khabīṣ*-type pudding named after the town of Asyūṭ, bread crumbs, honey, syrup, dry dates, musk, rose-water, and saffron were combined with almonds, pistachios, and poppy seeds.[783] In a version of *sitt an-Nūba*, "Nubian lady," an Egyptian sweet chicken dish, pistachios were mixed with purslane seeds (*baqla ḥamqāʾ*, *rijla*).[784] But *sitt an-Nūba*, in which purslane seeds were *de rigeur*, was an exceptional preparation—as far as the culinary use of seeds is concerned, the Cairene food culture generally preferred sesame (*simsim*) and poppy seeds (*khashkhāsh*).[785]

Apart from those mentioned above, one of the most characteristic of Egyptian poppy seed preparations was *khashkāshiyya*. This "poppy dish" made of chicken and poppy seeds cooked in syrup belonged to those typical local preparations which bewildered ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī so much.[786] There was also another dish bearing the same name. This, however, was a regular (i.e. not sweet) stew made of meat or chicken and poppy seeds and flavored with coriander, salt, Chinese cinnamon, and sugar or honey.[787] Unlike poppy seeds, sesame seeds were almost always accom-

[780] For *qaṭāʾif* as mentioned in the Geniza documents see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 246.

[781] For a more detailed discussion of these sweetmeats see below, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," p. 309.

[782] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 412; *Wuṣla*, 634; *Kanz*, 55, n. 132.

[783] For recipes for *asyūṭiyya* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 413 (a recipe for the dish on p. 454 does not call for poppy seeds); *Wuṣla*, 638; *Kanz*, 55, n. 131; 104, n. 269; 106, n. 274.

[784] For a recipe for *sitt an-Nūba* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 359; for more references regarding the dish see above, chapter II.3. "Fowls and eggs," p. 205.

[785] Of other kinds of seeds, safflower seeds were occasionally added to some sour stews, while white cumin, nigella, and seeds of the mastic tree, were sprinkled by bakers on the bread crust; see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 23 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 48).

[786] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 (fol. 47*l*); see also above, chapter II.3. "Fowls and eggs," p. 205.

[787] For the recipe see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 353; see also a recipe in *Kanz*, 23, n. 31.

panied by nuts: in spicy cookies called *khubz al-abāzīr* they were used together with pistachios and almonds, in *ḥays* together with pistachios, almonds, and walnuts,[788] while in eggplant stuffing they were combined with walnuts.[789] In *basīsa*, however, sesame seeds made a sweet mixture with bread crumbs and poppy seeds.[790] Mixed with walnuts, garlic, thyme, cumin, and sesame oil, sesame seeds made an interesting marinade in which smoked olives were pickled.[791]

As a matter of fact, there was nothing special about the culinary use of sesame seeds unless they were ground and processed into a paste called *ṭaḥīna*. One of the hallmarks of the Near Eastern cuisine of today, *ṭaḥīna* seems to have been used in Egypt from at least the second century B.C.E.[792] In the Middle Ages *ṭaḥīna* was used, above all, as an ingredient of fish condiments and various relishes, more or less as today. Of these, a preparation called *ḥummuṣ*, or hummus, survived till modern times and has enjoyed a global fame from the second half of the twentieth century. As in the Middle Ages food had to be complexly and intensively aromatic,[793] the modern *ṭaḥīna* preparations cannot equal the medieval ones as far as the composition of flavorings is concerned. This may be less visible in fish stuffings or fish sauces, in which *ṭaḥīna* was accompanied by sumac, garlic, thyme, walnuts, coriander, cinnamon, caraway, mastic, sesame oil, lemon juice, parsley, mint, and, sometimes, also by rue, almonds, and pistachios.[794] The composition, although richer than contemporary Near Eastern fish condiments is, in fact, not radically different from them. As for hummus, however, the medieval palates would probably not appreciate a dish as "bland" as the present-day chickpea puree, blended with lemon juice, garlic, and *ṭaḥīna* into a creamy paste. In medieval Cairene hummus, pounded cooked chickpeas were usually mixed with *ṭaḥīna*,

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[788] For a more detailed comment on *ḥays* see above, chapter II.7. "Fruits," p. 284.

[789] For the recipe see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 396.

[790] For recipes for *khubz al-abāzīr* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 431; for *basīsa*, ibid., 436.

[791] For the recipe see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 403.

[792] See Darby, *Food*, I, 497–8; II, 785–6. For an interesting study on sesame (*Sesamum orientale* or *indicum*) see *EI2,* IX, "Simsim" by A. Dietrich.

[793] See below, chapter II.9.E. "Spices, herbs, fragrances," pp. 325–31.

[794] In *summāqiyya*, a sour meat stew to which *ṭaḥīna* was added, the set of ingredients was generally similar: Chinese cinnamon, mastic, oil, mint, sumac, coriander, spice mix (*aṭrāf*), walnuts, almonds and garlic; for recipe see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 312. For recipes for fish sauces and stuffings see, for example, ibid., 388, 394, 390; also description of fish as prepared by the bazaar fish fryers, Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56 (quoted below, chapter II.9.E. "Spices, herbs, fragrances," p. 329); see also above, chapter II.4. "Fish," p. 215.

vinegar, oil, pepper, spice mix (*aṭrāf*), mint, pistachios, cinnamon, toasted caraway, dry coriander, salt, salted lemons, and olives. There were also less complex versions of the dish, but even the simplest ones called for flavorings such as vinegar, *murrī* sauce, caraway, oil, pepper, cinnamon, and dry rosebuds.[795] However, the most interesting *ṭaḥīna* dips were made without chickpeas. In such preparations *ṭaḥīna* could be mixed with rose-water, vinegar, honey, mustard seeds, boiled onion, and rue,[796] or blended into a rich paste with pounded sumac, thyme, garlic, salt, milled mastic, Chinese cinnamon, hot sesame oil with cumin seeds, pepper, ginger, caraway, and lemon juice or vinegar. The flavor of the latter condiment attained perfection when left for a few days to mature.[797]

9. Flavorings and Other Food Additives

According to the arguments discussed by E.N. Anderson, the great cuisines of the world are characterized by all distinctive assemblages of flavorings—herbs, spices, fermented preparations, and condiments in general.[798] Of course, signature of flavorings can change, if only because people change their tastes for various reasons. Generally, two fundamental factors seem to govern flavor preferences of humans. One is biology, which "sets the parameters;" the other is culture, which "fine-tunes the actual patterns of behavior."[799] The function of culture is probably more obvious, if only because it is relatively apparent that elements such as habitat, ethnicity, tradition, class, religion, beliefs, habits, fashions, and prevailing knowledge play a significant role in defining "good" and "bad" flavors and tastes.

The complex role of biology is much less evident. According to Howard Ehrlichman and Linda Bastone, one of its fundaments is an innate tendency of humans (the mechanisms of which are not specified) to find some scents attractive and other unattractive.[800] As for the attractive scents, it seems certain that humans have an inborn liking for volatiles associated

[795] See the recipe for fried *ṭirrīkh* (salted fish) in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 392.
[796] For recipes see, for example, ibid., 383; *Kanz*, 218–23.
[797] For recipe see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 405–6; *Kanz*, 100, n. 258; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 19a.
[798] The so-called "flavor principle" developed by Elisabeth and Paul Rozin; see Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 190.
[799] Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 73.
[800] Quoted in ibid., 73.

with fruit, flowers, foliage, and plant life in general. Interestingly, humanity's acute sensitivity to and fondness for these volatiles may be explained in medical terms: common spices, herbs, and some allium species contain potent antimicrobial and antifungal chemicals. Many volatiles have stimulant and digestive activity in humans, some are insecticidal or insect repellent, still others are destructive to food poisoning bacteria.[801]

Paul Sherman and Jennifer Billing argue that people have learned over the millennia to use the preservative, antiseptic, and disinfectant qualities of various volatiles. The widespread use of volatile-oil-rich plants in food preservation and, above all, in traditional medicine, confirms the correctness of this argument.[802] For example, of the popular medieval Cairene seasonings, mint is used throughout the world for stomach aches (it contains the volatile oils which have carminative, stimulant, and antiseptic properties), cumin is antimicrobial, stimulant, and carminative. Cinnamon has traditionally been used to treat toothache and its regular use is believed to stave off common cold and to aid digestion. It has also been used to treat diarrhea and other problems of the digestive system. The essential oil of cinnamon has also antimicrobial properties, which can aid the preservation of certain foods. Green cardamom is broadly used to treat infections in teeth and gums, to prevent and treat throat troubles, the congestion of the lungs and pulmonary tuberculosis, inflammation of eyelids, and digestive disorders. The essential oil of clove is used as a painkiller for dental emergencies. Cloves are used as a carminative, to increase hydrochloric acid in the stomach and to improve peristalsis. Cloves are also said to be a natural antihelmintic (i.e. drug that expels parasitic worms from the body).

Considering the above, one could agree with the conclusion that "an inborn fondness for antiseptics, fine-tuned by culture,"[803] constituted the motive behind human quest for spices and, as such, made history.[804] Flavor preferences, like other bases of foodways, are no doubt a biocultural phenomenon. However, while an inborn fondness for antiseptics may have indeed guided humans in their choice of medically useful plants, this

[801] Ibid., 73–6.
[802] Quoted in ibid., 73. For detailed discussion on patterns of spice use, on antimicrobial properties of spices, and on spice synergism see Paul W. Sherman and Jennifer Billing, "Darwinian Gastronomy: Why We Use Spices," *BioScience*, 49/6 (June 1999), 453–63.
[803] Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 81.
[804] Ibid., 81.

ability does not seem to have been the sole biological factor responsible for people's taste preferences.

In fact, such an inborn fondness does not refer to antiseptics only—for example, man's desire for sweet-tasting nutrients is basically instinctive, too.[805] Furthermore, one should also keep in mind that certain seasonings, apart from being antiseptic, may also have addictive influence. Such is the case of chocolate and chili peppers, the consumption of which can lead to enhanced secretion of opiate-like endorphins.[806] Both chocolate and chili peppers were unknown in the pre-sixteenth-century western hemisphere. But there was salt, or sodium chloride, a chemical compound which can also be addictive. Salt is essential for transporting nutrients and oxygen, transmitting nerve impulses, and moving muscles, including the heart. Humans are constantly losing salt through bodily functions. As the body has to compensate to maintain homeostasis, one eats salty foods. If one eats salty foods for a long period of time, the body becomes dependent on salt to maintain balance, as is the case of caffeine, heroin, and nicotine. In effect, reducing salt intake can create symptoms of physical withdrawal. Besides, if used for the production of salt-fermented fish, salt contributes to creating a concentrated source of appetite-stimulating flavors—above all monosodium glutamate (MSG), a substance which, characterized by its flavor-enhancing effects, appears to have been the reason behind the Romans' passion for the fish sauce called *garum* (*liquamen*).

A. *Salt*

Salt, the only edible rock and the world's most desired food additive, was used in Egypt since antiquity, both as a dehydrating food-preserving agent and as a flavor enhancer.[807] With sea-salt regarded as impure, the ancient Egyptians seemed to have consumed only the mineral obtained from the inland sources in Pelusium and in the Western Desert.[808] In later epochs,

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[805] See below, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," p. 298.

[806] The brain releases endorphins to counteract the pain caused by capsaicin (the chemical that gives chili its heat). When the capsaicin in the chili comes in contact with the nerves in the mouth, pain signals are sent to the brain. In reaction to this, the brain releases its natural painkillers, which are endorphins, which in turn create a feeling of well being. The release of endorphins upon ingestion of chocolate probably explains the comforting feelings that many people associate with this food and the craving for chocolate in times of stress.

[807] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 38–9.

[808] For details on salt and its use in ancient Egypt see Darby, *Food*, I, 443–52.

the ancient prejudices fell into oblivion so that in the Middle Ages salt could be extracted both from the natural salt pans in the Egyptian interior and from artificial salines on the Mediterranean seacoast. The latter variety, however, was presumably "extremely bitter and resembled alum."[809] Nevertheless, the supply was high and the prices low, so much so that the Venetians often bought Egyptian salt in order to use it as ballast.[810]

According to a medieval Egyptian dietician, "salt is necessary in four cases. One, when food is viscid and tough and needs something to break its viscidity and toughness and to balance them . . . Two, when food is tasteless and needs something that would give it a taste we like . . . Salt is also necessary when food is excessively moist and needs something to dry the moisture . . . Finally, it is needed when the greasiness and bad smell have to be removed from food."[811] In practical terms, this meant that almost no dish could do without salt. However, salt was never added to sweets, which was despite the fact that in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine the use of sugar or honey did not exclude the use salt of in the same dish. Egyptian cooks could counter salt with sugar, but they never got the idea of making sugar "bring out the saltiness of salt."[812] For some reasons, the manner of sugar salting, so fancied by the Swedes, would not be appreciated by the Near Easterners. The latter had other ways to make salt more agreeable. One of them involved closing the crystals of rock salt in a jar and baking them for a whole day in the *tannūr* oven. Afterwards the salt was milled and mixed with roasted coriander, cumin, sesame, hemp, nigella seeds, poppy seeds, fennel, asafetida, anise and, optionally, with thyme. To please not only the palate, but also the eye, the condiment, called *milḥ muṭayyab* or "spiced salt," could be dyed before baking: red with sumac, yellow with saffron, green with chard broth, or blue with indigo.[813]

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[809] Wild, *Voyages*, 152. According to Wild (*Voyages*, 152), the salines near Alexandria were made by digging on the seaside "holes and ditches where the sea water gathered. Then the hit of the sun evaporated this water until finally only salt was left."

[810] Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 26. On tax on salt in medieval Egypt see Rabie, *Financial System*, 86–7. On salt in the medieval Islamic world see also *EI2,* VII, "Milḥ" by J. Sadan.

[811] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 163.

[812] Kurlansky, *Salt*, 400. On countering salt with sugar in the Arabic-Islamic cookery see also above chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 215.

[813] Al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 80, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 91; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 404; cf. also a number of recipes for *milḥ muṭayyab* in al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 52–3 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 144–5).

B. *Sweetening Agents*

The spicy and fragrant cookery of the High Middle Ages relished the combination of sweet and savory. Both Europe and the Near East added sweetening agents not only to confections but also to meat dishes—although the Near East, using the products of its own sugar industry, could sweeten its preparations in a much more liberal manner. It has been suggested that the medieval world inherited the taste for sweetening food from the Graeco-Roman cookery[814]—indeed, the Romans sweetened everything, including salty fish sauces.[815] It has also been said, however, that man's desire for sweet-tasting nutrients is basically instinctive and, as such, cannot be attributable to the mere learning of the rapid satiation effect that sugars provide.[816] This would imply that man's historical quest to satiate his inborn taste for sweetness cannot actually be a matter of fashion. To say that the Cairenes—or, in fact, any other urban Arabic-Islamic medieval cuisine—sweetened their preparations exceedingly just because such is the human instinct would, however, miss the point.

Fashions have their rights, and man's desire to comply with them is historically no less causative than the inborn need of being satiated with any compound. In the case of sweet-tasting nutrients it is the local styles which set the standards of satiation and deficit—as, in fact, in the case of any other nutrients. In other words, these standards are governed not only by biological needs and fashions, but also by environment, traditions, habits, customs, economy, health considerations, and other influences unrelated to physiology or temporary fashion. This implies that man's desire to consume sweetening agents varies from culture to culture. The amounts of honey thrown into the Inuite pots would probably never satiate the Puerto Ricans' appetite for sweetness.[817] The ancient Arabs liked their food sweet, so much so that "food that had no sweetness in it" was considered by them "lacking and incomplete."[818] By accident or by an actual historical

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[814] Rodinson, "Studies," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arabic Cookery*, 202.

[815] Cf. Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, *passim*. On sweet flavor and sweetening agents as used in the Roman cuisine see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 146–9.

[816] M.R. Kare and O. Maller, eds., *The Chemical Senses and Nutrition* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), as quoted in Darby, *Food*, I, 425; see also Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books, Viking Penguin, 1985), 3–18, where the factors governing sugar consumption are discussed from anthropological point of view.

[817] On the Puerto Ricans' taste for sugar see Mintz, *Sweetness*, xvii–xxiv.

[818] Al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 393, quoting Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim Ibn Sallam (d. 838), a grammarian and the author of *Kitāb al-Amthāl*, the first anthology of Arab proverbs.

link, this rule agreed perfectly with how the Romans and the Cairenes liked their food to taste. Interestingly, it also accorded with the way the classical Indian and Greek dietetics countered "hotness" of sour and salty with "cold" sugar to achieve the proper balance of food.[819]

Be that as it may, the medieval Cairenes' taste for sweetness, like that of the ancient Romans, was a demanding one and the standard was set rather high both in Cairo and Rome. The amounts of sweetening agents consumed in Cairo were huge, and their kinds were even more diversified than in the antiquity, due to the recent appearance of sugar cane in the area. Except for fried egg preparations, fish, and some pickles, most foods were sweetened, either with honey or with sugar and its derivatives, such as syrups and molasses.[820] Moreover, in many recipes more than one sweetener was called for, and the fact that a stew was cooked with honey did not preclude sweetening it with sugar or adding syrup into it. Non-sour stews, however, were sweetened only occasionally.

In Egypt, both honey and sugar were domestically produced and rather easily available in medieval Cairo. The history of honey, the main sweetener of antiquity, is obviously much longer than that of sugar but, at the same time, far less exciting. Honey was present in Egypt since Pharaonic times. First as an expensive commodity which only the wealthy could afford, then, from the Middle Kingdom (roughly between 2040 B.C.E. and 1640 B.C.E.) on, as an apparently more commonly used delicacy.[821] Despite the introduction of sugar shortly after the Arab conquest, the demand for honey remained high among Egyptian consumers in the Middle Ages. So much so that the local apiculture was not able to meet the needs of the Egyptian market and considerable quantities of the product had to be imported from Palestine, Tunisia, Cyrenaica and, at least periodically from the seventh/thirteenth century on, also from Europe.[822]

[819] Collingham, *Curry*, 8, and the references therein. On the action of sweet and saline taste according to Ayurveda see Dash, *Fundamentals*, 124–5.

[820] Like in Rome, a fish sauce could be sweetened, here too; see, for example, a recipe for *khardal* in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 407 (the same in *Kanz*, 183, n. 496) and for *ithān* (?), in ibid., 408. Otherwise, sweetening fish sauces seems to have been a rather irregular practice; cf. above, chapter II.2.D. "Fish," p. 205.

[821] On honey and its production in ancient Egypt see Darby, *Food*, I, 430–9.

[822] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 125–6; Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 17, 23, 126, 146, 151, 237, 244, 268, 336, 352, 360, 494. For details referring to honey production in medieval Egypt see al-Idrīsī, *Opus geographicum*, Naples-Rome 1973, fasc. iii, 249–319, where the yearly Egyptian beekeepers' operation of moving hives to areas where selected plants were most abundant is discussed; the fragment from *Opus geographicum* is mentioned in *EI2,* VII, "Naḥl" by F. Vire. According to al-ʿUmarī, in his own times (the mid-eighth/fourteenth

As for the production of sugar, it is generally accepted that sugar was manufactured in Egypt from ca. the second/eighth century, when sugar cane became cultivated in the Delta and along the lower Nile valley, following the Arab conquest of the region. Valued not only for its sweetness but also for the medicinal properties which it was believed to posses, sugar sold well in the local markets and with time turned into an important, widely traded commodity.[823] By the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries sugar manufacture spread on a large scale from Lower to Upper Egypt, as well as to Fayyum and other oases. In the early eighth/fourteenth century there were ca. sixty six refineries (*maṭbakh*) in al-Fusṭāṭ alone and the volume of production was already so high that Egypt could export great quantities of sugar to Europe and Asia.[824] According to Eliyahu Ashtor, there are reasons "to believe that sugar [in medieval Egypt] was always a very costly item, whose consumption was beyond the reach of the poor."[825] Beside the fact that things do not need to be costly to be beyond the reach of the poor, the assumption of high price of Egyptian sugar needs not be applied to this period. As most of the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries were the boom decades for Egyptian sugar manufacture, the local market, satiated with sugar, would rather not hike prices to protect the product. This, however, was to change radically soon.

century) honey was available in Egypt "in moderate quantities, while sugar was abundant;" al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 84.

[823] The precise date of the arrival of sugar cane in Egypt and of the start of local sugar production has not been established conclusively. According to Marius Canard, the sugar cane cultivation, although attested in Egypt for the second century C.E., was in fact developed there only after the Arab conquest; see *EI2,* IV, "Ḳaṣab as-sukkar" by M. Canard; see also Mez, *Renesans islamu*, 404; Darby, however, does not confirm the cultivation of sugar cane in Egypt before the seventh century C.E.; see Darby, *Food*, I, 424–42. According to Watson, *Agricultural Innovation*, 28, the first clear reference to the growing of sugar cane in Egypt comes from a papyrus of the mid-eighth century; the same is said in *EI2,* IX, "Sukkar" by D. Waines. On the origins and diffusion of sugar cane see Watson, *Agricultural Innovation*, 25–30; for its cultivation in Egypt see Eliyahu Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Industry in the Late Middle Ages: A Case of Technological Decline," in Udovitch, *Islamic Middle East*, 91–4; Tsugitaka Sato, "Sugar in the Economic Life of Mamluk Egypt," *MSR* 8/2 (2004): 87–92. According to Sato, sugar production in Egypt was conducted with high technology, large capital outlays, and much labor and, as such, was mostly carried out under the governmental control from the Fatimid period on; see Sato, "Sugar," 92.

[824] For the growth of the Egyptian sugar production and the data on sugar as a trade commodity see Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 30, 32, 68, 206–7; idem, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 94–9; Sato, "Sugar," 97–100; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 125–6. On the tax on sugar manufacture see Rabie, *Financial System*, 82.

[825] Ashtor, "Diet," 132.

The prosperity lasted until the end of the eighth/fourteenth century when, due to a variety of reasons, the number of Egyptian refineries decreased dramatically and sugar production declined.[826] Egypt not only became unable to export its sugar but, moreover, could not meet the demand of its own market. From the ninth/fifteenth century on both sugar and sugar molasses had to be brought from Sicily and Cyprus.[827] Naturally enough, this resulted in significant rise of prices which increased by 200 percent or more in comparison to the end of the seventh/thirteenth century.[828] Sugar became scarce and expensive, and the overall sweetmeats' production diminished considerably. As a result, many confectioners had to close their businesses. The year 817/1414 was so bad that the traditionally very sweet festivals of Rajab, of mid-Shaʿbān and of *ʿīd al-fiṭr* ("breaking of the Ramadan fast") had to do without festive confections which annually filled the countless stalls of Cairo, al-Fusṭāṭ, and the neighboring countryside. The Cairene superb and flourishing Confectioners' Market (Sūq al-Ḥalawiyyīn) in the vicinity of Bāb Zuwayla fell into decay.[829] But the problem was only temporary. However violent the decline of the local sugar industry in the late Mamluk period, the situation seemed to have returned to normal by the end of the tenth/sixteenth century. In the late 1590s Cairenes enjoyed candies and confections distributed on the occasion of the Nile Inundation holiday.[830] In 1609 Johann Wild could see both sugar and honey sold in the markets of Cairo,[831] and some decades later Antonius Gonzales wrote about raw sugar being made in the Rosetta area, as well as about refined sugar of which all kinds of sweets were made.[832] In the eleventh/seventeenth century the revitalized sugar production became once more an important branch of the Egyptian economy.[833]

Before this happened, in the end of the eighth/fourteenth century cane sugar acquired traits of luxuriousness. This did not imply that sweetness

[826] The decline of the Egyptian sugar industry was one of the symptoms of the decline of the Mamluk state; both resulted from the general economic crisis caused by Black Death, corruption, and aversion to technological innovation; see Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 206–7; idem, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 98–107, 112–120; Sato, "Sugar," 99–100, 107, n. 110; Mintz, *Sweetness*, 29–30.

[827] Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 208.

[828] Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 107.

[829] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 99–100.

[830] Harant, *Voyage*, 236.

[831] Wild, *Voyages*, 183.

[832] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 513; also Wild, *Voyages*, 151–2.

[833] Nelly Hanna, *Making Big Money in 1600. The Life and Times of Ismaʿil Abu Taqiyya, Egyptian Merchant*, Cairo 1998, 81–4.

itself became an extravagant commodity—in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century Ibn Sūdūn and his fellow-hashish eaters could apparently still frequent the city's sweet shops in order to appease their drug-increased appetite. Many of the confectioners were clearly trying to survive the hard times and run the business regardless of the difficulties which were affecting local sugar industry. As quality sugar was exceedingly expensive, one had to resort to molasses, a by-product of sugar manufacture. In order to get an idea of what the medieval Cairene sugar and molasses were, certain aspects of Near Eastern sugar manufacture should be explained.[834]

The crucial stage of the sugar production process started with pressing the juice from crushed sugar cane and boiling it in order to produce syrup. The syrup was then reduced and poured into the conical pottery molds (*abālīj al-fakhkhār*) whose narrowing bases were punched with three small holes. From the slow draining of the liquid two products resulted: a cone-shaped loaf of raw, poor quality red sugar (*qand*), and first molasses (*ʿasal al-qaṭr*),[835] collected in jars placed under the molds. The raw sugar could be dissolved and further boiled for the second or third time to produce molasses of higher grades (*qaṭr*, *qaṭr an-nabāt, qaṭr mukarrar*) and, above all, loaves of various refined kinds of sugar, including white *fānīd* (*bānīd*) sugar and *sukkar tabarzad*, or rock, high quality sugar. A very particular product was the so-called white sugar (*as-sukkar al-abyaḍ*), made by dissolving raw sugar with water and boiling it with fresh milk.[836] The by-product of this operation was *quṭṭāra*, or fine molasses.[837] There was also *as-sukkar an-nabāt*, literally "sugar plants," a product which contemporary

[834] For a detailed description of the sugar production technology see an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 267–71 (in Egypt) and 271–2 (in Syria); also Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 150–55. The question was studied by Sato, "Sugar," 92–7; and Katherine Strange Burke, "A Note on Archeological Evidence for Sugar Production in the Middle Islamic Periods in Bilād al-Shām," *MSR* 8/2 (2004): 112–18. For various kinds of medieval Near Eastern sugar, and for the contemporary scholars' attempts to define them, see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 308–9; at-Tamīmī, *Kitāb al-Murshid*, in Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 130–31; an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 267–71; Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 96–7; idem, *Levantine Trade*, 206; Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 221, n. 289; Sato, "Sugar," 96; Waines, "Sukkar;" Ahsan, *Social Life*, 100–3; Nasrallah, *Annals*, 599, 600.

[835] First molasses has the highest sugar content because comparatively little sugar has been extracted from the juice.

[836] As a result, sugar took in calcium from milk, which added whiteness to it.

[837] It seems that in the Middle Ages there was certain confusion regarding the terminology referring to molasses: according to ash-Shayzarī, for example, *quṭṭāra* was identical with *ʿasal al-qaṣab* (ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40), while Ibn al-Ukhuwwa differentiated between the two products and maintained that *ʿasal al-qaṣab*, unlike *quṭṭāra* (which he also called *al-ʿasal al-qaṭṭār*), had "sharpness" in it (Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 196).

scholars tend to relate to once-boiled, poor quality sugar.[838] But it was not exactly so: actually, *as-sukkar an-nabāt* were crystallized sugar candies, or quasi-lollipops, "grown" of sugar cooked with rose-water, violet water, or "from decoction of sugar strongly thickened and not involving any syrup."[839] Its quality was high enough to make a fourth/tenth-century dietician call it "one of the most excellent kinds of sugar according to its nature and one of the best and strongest."[840] *As-sukkar an-nabāt* must have been highly appreciated indeed, as sultan Baybars I sent it (in 661/1262) as a gift to Berke Khān to welcome the latter into the community of believers. Apart from *as-sukkar an-nabāt*, the gift set included also white sugar, as well as carpets, golden candles, significant quantities of various arms and armor, a copy of Qurʾan "which was said to have been written in Uthmān's hand," and other precious things.[841]

As far as the use of honey and sugar in cooking is concerned, it is probably not possible to establish definitely the popularity of one sweetening agent over another. In the Arabic-Islamic cuisine food preparations were sweetened either with sugar, obtained from scrapped, crushed, or powdered loaf, or with syrupy sugar solution (*jullāb*), or with honey. Some recipes offered an option to chose between two items, for instance between honey and sugar. Others called for both honey and sugar, while still others recommended adding syrup as well. Precise measures of sweeteners were given only occasionally—generally, the cook was advised to put in as much honey or sugar "as needed," although in the case of sour stews the recipes often recommended sweetening with a little sugar. Judging by the recipes, they tended to call for sugar and honey more or less equally, with sugar slightly edging out honey. For some reasons, possibly related to

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[838] Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 96–7; Sato, "Sugar," 96.

[839] As at-Tamīmī explained, it was "produced with palm-branches from julep syrup, rose syrup or violet syrup and it adhered to these branches like the albumin of egg, white and pure;" see Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 130; also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 309.

[840] See Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 130; cf. Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 221, n. 289. On *as-sukkar an-nabāt* see also Nasrallah, *Annals*, 601.

[841] Within the same delivery, Berke also received slave cooks, earthenware pots, horses, camels, donkeys, strange animals like monkeys, parrots, giraffe, black slaves, and servants. See Ibn ʿAbd aẓ-Ẓāhir, *Rawḍ az-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik aẓ-Ẓāhir*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 173; Baybars ad-Dawādār, *Zubdat al-Fikra fī Tārīkh al-Hijra* (*ʿAṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*), ed. Zubayda Muḥammad ʿAṭā (Cairo: Ein for Human and Social Studies, n.d.), 114; al-Yunīnī, *Dhayl Mirʾāt az-Zamān* (Hyderabad: Dar al-Maaref Osmania, 1954), I, 197; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd al-Jumān*, I, 362. Also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/2, 497, n. 3, where relevant fragments of Ibn Wāṣil and Ibn Abī Faḍāʾil are quoted. Cf. above, chapter I.4. "The Cairene cook," p. 122.

its "hot and dry" nature—as defined by the Galenic criteria—honey was almost absolutely avoided in sour stews, the "hot" sourness of which was preferably countered with "cold" sugar and syrup.[842]

However, if we are to believe the message suggested by a medieval Cairene fantasy story, the status of sugar was not as regular as the cookery books might suggest. The story, titled *The Delectable War between Mutton and the Refreshments of the Market-Place*, while clearly stressing the superiority of honey, features sugar as a nutrient consumed mostly by the sick, either as an ingredient of dietetic non-meat dishes meant for them (*muzawwarāt*), or added to beverages and concoctions to be drunk by "those stricken with fever, sore throat or indigestion."[843] Indeed, sugar was not only considered "less detrimental to the stomach" than honey but, unlike honey, it was also non-heating, soothing, and medicinal.[844] The sick were fed with sugared food and cured with syrupy potions. Actually, the opinion of sugar as an effective and universal remedy was—very much like in medieval Europe, by the way—common knowledge in medieval Cairo,[845] and the therapeutic values of sugar may have indeed proved damaging to its reputation as a nutritive. The problem is, however, that other sources do not confirm dislike for, or avoidance of, sugar among Cairenes. The recipes which call for sugar seem to deny the low status of sugar suggested in the *Delectable War*, as do the records referring to the demand for sweets, or the descriptions of all kinds of Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk food banquets for the preparations of which thousands of sugar loaves were used.[846]

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[842] For the properties of honey as discussed from medical point of view see Galen, *De alimentorum facultatibus*, in Owen Powell, *Galen: On the Properties of Foodstuffs* (*De alimentorum facultatibus*). *Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 148–9; al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 311–13; also Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 128–30, where at-Tamīmī's commentary is translated.

[843] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 92 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. trans. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 5).

[844] See, for example, al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 309, according to whom "the difference between the sweetness of sugar and that of honey is that the sweetness of honey is heating and drying, while the sweetness of sugar is soothing and moistening. That is why sugar causes less thirst and is less detrimental to the stomach." For the comparison between the properties of sugar and honey see also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 49 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 139); Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 284, n. 148 and 304, n. 200; Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 128–30.

[845] For the medicinal uses of sugar in medieval Egypt see below, pt. III, chapter V.2. "*Ashriba*: syrupy 'drinks'," pp. 461–2.

[846] For the Fatimid epoch see, for example, *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 57; for the Ayyubid and Mamluk banquets see Ashtor, "Levantine Sugar Industry," 95; also Sato, "Sugar," 103–7, where numerous examples of "sugar as a festival good" are quoted.

As for the use of sugar cane molasses, the picture presented in the *Delectable War* accords well with other historical records. The story shows molasses as a rather depreciated product, useful "only for topping the rice porridges[847] on cold days,"[848] which may be a good explanation why the cookbooks do not mention molasses almost at all. The exception among the cookbooks is *Kanz*, which includes a number of recipes calling for *qaṭr an-nabāt* (one of the higher grade molasses), and some calling for *quṭṭāra* (fine molasses, the by-product of refining sugar with milk). In most cases, both were used as an alternative to bee honey, syrup or sugar solution: *quṭṭāra* sweetened sweetmeats and beverages, while *qaṭr an-nabāt* was used in various sweet preparations, including pastry such as *kunāfa*, samosas, and *qaṭāʾif* pancakes.[849]

In similar combinations, molasses appears in the work of Ibn Sūdūn, the author whose lifetime roughly coincided with the time when *Kanz* was compiled. What is important, as a hashish addict Ibn Sūdūn was also an avowed lover of sweetmeats and, therefore, a frequent customer of Cairo confectioners' stores. Interestingly, throughout his prose and dreamy poems, streams of molasses (*qaṭr* or *qaṭr an-nabāt*) flow not less often than those of honey and syrup, either dripping from *kunāfas* and *qaṭāʾif*, or flooding as a dip for ripe bananas.[850] Similar pictures can be found in *Maṭāliʿ al-Budūr*, an *adab*-style anthology written by ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn al-Ghuzūlī, a Syrian who had visited Cairo a number of times before he died in 815/1412.[851] The latter two sources leave no doubt as to the popularity of molasses among Cairo confectioners, at least in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century. This was later confirmed by Leo Africanus who passed by vast sugar cane plantations and sugar factories while traveling across the Lower Egypt to Cairo in the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century. According to him, the cane which grew there did not provide

847 Ar. "*ʿaṣāʾid*," sing. *ʿaṣīda*, that is a rural-style porridge made of flour, rice and sesame oil; the preparation could be topped with honey, syrup, or molasses; see above, chapter II.1.C. "Rice," pp. 148–9.

848 Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 90–1 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. trans. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 4).

849 For recipes calling for *quṭṭāra* see *Kanz*, 113, n. 295; 128, n. 338 (the same version in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 21b–22a); 160, n. 431; 162, n. 434 (the same version in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 23a); 183, n. 496; 213, n. 595; see also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197, where *quṭṭāra* is used as an ingredient of *fuqqāʿ*. For recipes calling for *qaṭr an-nabāt*, see *Kanz*, 35, n. 67; 37, n. 73; 49, n. 115 (the same version in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 12b); 114, n. 298; 125, nn. 328, 329; 126, n. 331; 127, n. 335.

850 Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, *passim*.

851 Al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 360, 393, 396–400.

good quality sugar; "instead," he noted, "they extract kind of honey from it, similar to grape syrup, that is consumed all over Egypt, for one cannot find honey in this country."[852]

The relative popularity of molasses in the ninth/fifteenth- and the tenth/sixteenth-century Egypt does not deny the low status of the product as compared to sugar and honey. But it points to certain modification of consumers' attitudes. The actual demand for sugar cane molasses must have been much higher than the cookbooks suggest. Moreover, it was high enough to allow the Venetians, Catalans, Sicilians, and Florentines make profits on the import of molasses from Europe[853] when the local production proved insufficient. However, the absence of molasses from most of the cookery books seems to indicate that originally the product was the sweetener of the poorer part of the society and, as such, could be ignored by the cuisine of the middle-class and of the elites. Actually, the compiler of *Kanz* was rather straightforward in indicating the status of those who consumed the product: in one of the recipes for *ḥalwa* sweet, he recommended to prepare it with sugar and honey but, "if somebody was poor," he adds, "he makes it with sugar cane molasses."[854] Even if the sugar cane molasses was disregarded by the better-off for most of the Middle Ages, the situation apparently changed fundamentally after the crisis in the Egyptian sugar industry. With sugar being scarce and extremely expensive, with honey either bought up or equally expensive, the urban cuisine made a tentative attempt to accept the hitherto disrespected sweetener. Molasses—after all a product of "quite a pleasant smell and taste," as *Larousse Gastronomique* defines it—grew in price, too, but was still affordable and available. And, in time, it became more and more popular. In fact, there are good reasons to believe that all the references to molasses in *Kanz* were inserted into the recipes as a consequence of the decline of the Egyptian sugar industry.[855]

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[852] L'Africain, *Description*, 501. The account of Leo Africanus could, at least partly, be an effect of the work of various kinds of "tourist guides" who, while accompanying foreigners along the Rosetta-Cairo road, tried to explain to them elements of the local landscape (on such guides see, for example, Norden, *Travels*, I, 34–7). The information noted down by Arnold von Harff, who traveled from Rosetta to Cairo some two decades before Leo Africanus, was even more interesting. While commenting on "sugar honey," he remarked that with it "in this country all kinds of food are cooked, since they have no butter, which melts on account of the great heat;" von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 99.

[853] Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 208, 239, 341, 356, 498.

[854] *Kanz*, 162, n. 434.

[855] The corresponding recipes included in al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in *Waṣf*, or in *Wuṣla*, do not mention molasses as an optional sweetener.

Sugar cane molasses was much cheaper than sugar, syrup, or honey, but it was not the cheapest of sweeteners available in Cairo—*dibs* was even cheaper. The medieval meaning of the term *dibs* is not quite obvious. Today it designates date syrup (also in its dried form) extracted from fruit without cooking.[856] Charles Perry defines it as "a thick treacle or molasses of boiled-down date juice," "date molasses," or "a syrup of boiled-down dates or grape juice."[857] Maxime Rodinson translates it as *raisiné*, or grape juice, or as "a treacle of grapes, carob etc."[858] For David Waines it is simply "molasses."[859] The Arab editor of ash-Shayzarī's *ḥisba* manual explains *dibs* was a "honey made of pressed dates without cooking."[860] The same definition is also provided in *Tāj al-ʿArūs* dictionary (the twelfth/eighteenth century) as a quotation from Abū Ḥanīfa.[861] In fact, this definition corresponds to contemporary technology of *dibs* production, and there is no reason to doubt its correctness.

In the medieval urban art of cooking, *dibs* was not a popular ingredient. In fact, it was as unpopular as sugar molasses and, most probably, for very similar reasons. From time immemorial, the date pulp played a role of honey substitute (and later of sugar) for the poor.[862] It was fare suiting the peasant or the Bedouin, but it could not be appreciated by the well-off urbanite. *Dibs* appears in very few Arabic-Islamic recipes, usually as an optional ingredient and always independently of sugar or honey that were used in a given dish anyway. The preparations in which *dibs* was optionally called for included *sikbāj*, a sweet-sour stew made of fat meat, vegetables, almonds, and fruits,[863] a *jawādhib*-style pudding, and a *khabīṣ*-style pudding. *Dibs* could also be added to *murrī* sauce, to salted lemons, some pickles, some syrupy potions, or be used as an ingredient of some preserving "marinade" which was supposed to keep fruits fresh for a period of time.[864]

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[856] For the technology of *dibs*' production see Dagher, *Traditional Foods*, 101.

[857] Charles Perry, "Introductory Note" to Arberry's translation of "A Baghdad Cookery Book," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 22; idem, "*Kitāb al-Ṭibākha*," 471; idem, "Thousand and One "Fritters'," 491.

[858] Rodinson, "Recherches," 103; *EI2*, II, "G͟hid͟hāʾ" by idem.

[859] *EI2,* IX, "Sukkar" by D. Waines.

[860] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40, n. 8.

[861] Ibn Murtaḍā, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, IV, 145.

[862] Darby, *Food*, I, 440.

[863] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 305, 371; *Kanz*, 14, n. 7.

[864] See, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 400, 413, 414; *Kanz*, 172, n. 464; 198, n. 544; 208, n. 579; 211, n. 587; 256, n. 729; 263, n. 750.

The sweetening agents were universally applied in all branches of Cairene cookery. For the confection industry, however, they were of primary importance. The Arabic-Islamic medieval sweetmeats were extremely sweet, very nutty and greasy, usually floury, and always extremely nourishing. Some of them managed to survive until now in a relatively unchanged form. Served either together with other dishes, as a part of the more or less diverse "main course," or eaten as snacks between the meals, they were loved in the Near East, Egypt included. Cairene confectioners spared no efforts to attract customers and please not only their palates, but also their eyes. Inventiveness of the confectioners was truly admirable, if one considers the relatively limited assortment of ingredients used in the production of sweetmeats. The variety of what the city confectionaries offered was so immense that even the authors of market inspectors' manuals were helpless when faced with the necessity to understand the complexity of the business. "There are many kinds and different varieties of confectionery and it is impossible to understand all the characteristics and measures of ingredients,"[865] one of the authors wrote in despair. In the end he managed to discuss briefly ten kinds of sweets, presumably the most popular ones. Many decades later, the statement was repeated by another author who, however, was patient enough to mention over fifty names of sweetmeats offered by Cairene sweet stores.[866]

There is no point to study these products in detail.[867] If, however, the medieval Cairenes' predilections and preferences are to be defined, a short presentation of the most popular sweetmeats is necessary. The list should probably start with items which have the longest records in the local culinary history, such as *khushkanānj* (biscuits made of flour, sesame oil, sugar, almonds and some spices), *basandūd* (*khushkanānj* biscuits with a layer of plain *ḥalwa* between each two biscuits), and *fānīd* (a sweet made of melted sugar, flour, and honey), later known better as *kaʿb al-ghazāl*.[868]

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865 Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 63); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 47–9.

866 The list included, apart from "regular" sweetmeats, also preparations such as *khabīṣ*-pudding, chicken *harīsa*, or *asyūṭiyya*. A number of preparations from Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's list, being absent both from the cookery books and contemporary offer, remain unidentified; see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 181–4.

867 The most popular of medieval Near Eastern sweets were already discussed in Ahsan, *Social Life*, 98–100; Heine, *Kulinarische Studien*, 103–10; Perry, "What to Order," 222–3; idem, "Thousand and One "Fritters'," 492–4.

868 Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 144–6, 182, 213; partly repeated in al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 82, 172–4; Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 35, 64, 68, 90, 92–3, 104; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40–1 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 63–4); also al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II,

All three, apparently the Fatimids' sweet favorites, continued to be relished in the city throughout the Middle Ages. The same refers to the ring-shaped biscuits of *qāhiriyya*, the dough for which was made of pistachios and/or almonds milled with sugar and kneaded with rose-water, sesame oil and a little bit of flour, dipped in batter and fried.[869] Ready biscuits were subsequently dipped in hot syrup and honey.[870] The *zulābiyya* fritters also did well in Cairo throughout the Middle Ages. Sold by *zulbāniyyūn*, or professionals specialized in making it, *zulābiyya* was a kind of donut made by deep-frying lumps of leavened dough made of finely ground flour and coarsely ground semolina. The *zulābiyya* donut was not a sweet preparation in itself—it became such only when dipped, or soaked, in honey or syrup.[871] During the Fatimid epoch, both *qāhiriyya* and *zulābiyya* were distributed among the subjects on festive occasions.[872] *Nawāṭif* were also enjoyed in al-Fusṭāṭ—Cairo area from at least Fatimid times; they were made of thickened dissolved sugar or honey kneaded with toasted chick-peas, walnuts, pistachios, almonds, or sesame or poppy seeds.[873] Equally popular were *qaṭāʾif* pancakes, folded around a sweet nutty-oily filling made of ground almonds or pistachios kneaded with sesame oil, sugar and flour; fried, they were eaten dipped in honey, syrup, or sugar molasses.[874]

Interestingly, the Fatimid-era sources generally do not mention names of sweet preparations apart from the sweets discussed above, and apart from *ḥalwa* of various kinds.[875] As a matter of fact, by the time the Fatimids

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100. On *khushkanān* and *basandūd* see also above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," p. 165, and the references therein.

[869] For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 422, 433, 438, 458, 460; *Kanz*, 122, n. 322; *Wuṣla*, 644. Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 20b.

[870] See also above, chapter II.8. "Nuts and seeds," p. 292.

[871] For a detailed description of the product see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 25–6 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 50–1); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 41–2; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 180; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 438; *Wuṣla*, 646.

[872] See Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 67, 104; cf. al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 211.

[873] For references to *nawāṭif* see Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 93; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 40 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 63); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 48. For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 425, 454; *Wuṣla*, 638.

[874] For references to *qaṭāʾif* see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 246; idem, *Economic Foundations*, 115; cf. al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 210; for later mentions see, for example, al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 396–8; Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 50; on *qaṭāʾif* see also Rodinson, "Studies," 142, n. 6, and the references therein; Perry, "What to Order," 222–3; idem, "Familiar Foods," 283; idem, "Thousand and One "Fritters'," 492–3. For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 428, 434, 452; *Kanz*, 123, nn. 323, 324; 125, nn. 328, 329; *Wuṣla*, 628–9, 634.

[875] See Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 92, where *ḥalwa raṭiba* and *ḥalwa yābisa* are mentioned. *Ḥalwa yābisa*, or "dry *ḥalwa*," was a hard sweet made of boiled sugar solution and ground pistachios (for recipes see al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 83, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 98; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar

took power over Egypt, the Arabic-Islamic cuisine knew also marzipans, mentioned in the recipes as *lawzīnaj* and *fālūdhaj*. It is, however, difficult to state whether these famous sweetmeats were absent from the records relating to Fatimid Cairo because they were not known in the city at the moment the records were written, or because they were just not popular enough. Whatever the reason, the situation changed in later epochs, when the popularity of both *lawzīnaj* (in one version a paste of ground almonds and sugar, optionally stuffed with egg-white, in another a pastry stuffed with this paste)[876] and *fālūdhaj* (sweets made of ground almonds and sugar kneaded with syrup and rose-water)[877] became undisputable.[878] In post-Fatimid epoch equally popular were *ṣābūniyya* (the dough for which was made of sesame oil, starch, syrup, honey, pounded almonds, and rose-water mixed together and thickened by cooking), named this way after soap (*ṣābūn*) which it must have resembled[879] and the sweet called *kunāfa* which dripped with syrup or honey. In fact, *kunāfa* (a vermicelli-like dough wrapped around a sweet and greasy filling, made of crushed pistachio nuts, sugar, honey and sesame oil) did not become a part of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine before the seventh/thirteenth century.[880] The same

Foods," 415, 455; *Wuṣla*, 639). *Ḥalwa raṭiba*, or "moist *ḥalwa*" might have been be a soft, chewy sweet, made of made of starch, sugar/honey, flavorings such as rose-water, and (optionally) nuts, comparable to what is know in Turkey as *rahat lokum*, and in the West as "Turkish delight." The sweet seems to have been known in the Near East since at least Graeco-Roman times; see Daniel-Rops, *Życie w Palestynie*, 182.

876 For recipes see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 84, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 99–100; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 419, 453, 456–7; *Kanz*, 118, n. 311; *Wuṣla*, 641, 643. Cf. also Perry, "What to Order," 222.

877 For recipes see al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 85, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 100; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 419, 420, 457; *Wuṣla*, 642.

878 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 183; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 47.

879 Cf. the account of al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 191 (fol. 47*l*); according to Perry, "Thousand and One "Fritters'," 493, "*qāhiriyya* was *ṣābūniyya*, dipped in batter and fried." For recipes for *ṣābūniyya* see, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 84, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 99; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 417, 456; *Wuṣla*, 640–41; *Kanz*, 115, n. 302.

880 Actually, there is a controversy regarding the kind of dough in which the *kunāfa*'s nutty filling was wrapped. According to the recipes, the sweet mass was placed between two paper-thin flatbreads which in the end were cut into thin stripes; Ibn Sūdūn, however, speaks of *khuyūṭ al-kunāfa*, or "*kunāfa*'s threads," a vermicelli-like *kunāfa* resembling today's delicacy which is made by dribbling the batter onto the warmed metal through perforations. Unlike the sweetmeat described in the cookery books, it is sugar molasses or syrup, and not honey, that sweeten the whole thing in Ibn Sūdūn's *kunāfa*; see Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 51, 59, 56, 74. For recipes for *kunāfa* see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 436–7; *Kanz*, 107, n. 277; 114, n. 298; 124, n. 325; 126, n. 333. For comments regard-

was probably true of *baqlāwa*, today known as crushed nuts in a fillo pastry topped with syrup. Already popular in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century Cairo, *baqlāwa* cannot be found in any of the medieval Arabic-Islamic cookery books which suggests that this Central Asian invention must have been a relatively late addition to the city menu.[881]

Of all these items, *fālūdhaj*, a sweet which—as one early medieval author observed—ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb would not have approved of due to its Persian origin,[882] deserves more attention than others. This is not so much because of the ingredients of which its dough was made, but because the dough was kneaded into *tamāthīl*, or various shapes or statuettes. Such shapes, in a way comparable to contemporary marzipan imitations of various fanciful objects, constitute an interesting element in the history of Cairene, Near Eastern, and European confectionery. Today preferably made of marzipan, in medieval Cairo the sweet statuettes were formed of sugar or the so-called *ḥalwa yābisa* (dry *ḥalwa*), a hard sweet stuff made of syrup and ground pistachios.[883] The greatest variety of *tamāthīl* could be found in Sūq al-Ḥalawiyyīn, or Confectioners' Market neighboring Bāb Zuwayla, the city's southern gate. The place was particularly attractive during the Rajab holidays, when it periodically transformed into "one of the most beautiful things to see, with all those statuettes of horses, lions, cats etc. made of sugar."[884] They were called "pendents" (*ʿalālīq*), as they were hung on threads in the shops. The size of such pendents ranged from pieces weighting ¼ *raṭl* (ca. 110 grams) to those weighting 10 *raṭls* (ca. 4.5 kilograms). As making gifts of such statuettes was *de rigeur* during the Rajab feast, they filled not only Sūq al-Ḥalawiyyīn, but also other markets of al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo and their environs. And "everyone, from the noble to the miserable, had to buy these for his children and family."[885] But the

ing the kind of dough of which *kunāfa* was made see Rodinson, "Studies," 142, n. 5; Perry, "What to Order," 222–3; and idem, "Thousand and One 'Fritters'," 491.

[881] *Baqlāwa* is mentioned in Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 50; "The Tale of Jūdar and His Brothers," Night 615. On *baqlāwa* see Charles Perry, "The Taste for Layered Bread among the Nomadic Turks and the Central Asian Origins of Baklava," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 87–91.

[882] The words of Aṣmāʿī quoted by al-Jāḥiẓ (*Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ*, Damascus 1938, 316), quoted in Rodinson, "Studies," 151.

[883] Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 83, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 98; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 415, 455; *Wuṣla*, 639; on *ḥalwa* shaped by means of a mold (*qālab*, pl. *qawālib*) in form of a fish or bird see also *EI2*, VI, "Maṭbakh" by J. Burton-Page.

[884] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100.

[885] Ibid., II, 100; cf. Sato, "Sugar," 106.

imagination and craftsmanship of the local confectioners could be appreciated on ordinary days, too. Al-Maqrīzī once saw a sugar plate "on which there were dried fruits and a number of red pottery vessels some of which were filled with milk and some with various cheeses. Between the pottery there were cucumbers and bananas."[886]

These sugar statuettes of the late medieval Confectioners' Market were not the invention of the Cairene confectioners themselves. They were a direct, albeit modest, continuation of the magnificent festive food banquets (*simāṭ*s) of the Fatimids, whose sugar victuals, sculptured into models of castles, trees, animals and other shapes, were paraded annually through the city at the end of Ramadan.[887] The sugar sculptures of the Fatimids had, in turn, their predecessors in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine, where cakes shaped into palaces and animals were presented at festive Hebrew banquets. It is also probable, however, that the Fatimid confectioners directly followed the local ancient tradition which, dating back to at least the times of Ramses III (the twelfth century B.C.E.), could have endured in some communities in Egypt.[888] Interestingly, the idea of using sugar as a sculpting material became, at some point, popular also in medieval al-Andalus.[889] And it was probably from there that the art radiated further north to Europe, where it flourished in the form of enormous sugar and cake table decorations.[890]

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[886] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 100; cf. Sato, "Sugar," 106.

[887] According to al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 65, in the year 415/1025 the *simāṭ* of Ramadan included 152 sugar statuettes and 7 castles; see also *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 57; Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 26, 42, 96; Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 215. The tradition of sculpting sugar statuettes and castles was continued, if only occasionally, by the Ayyubids: the sugar castles were constructed, for example, to add splendor to the public banquet held below the Citadel to celebrate sultan al-ʿĀdil II's return to Cairo; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/2, 290. Apart from a verse in al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 119 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" there are probably no records referring to sugar constructions displayed by the Mamluks.

[888] According to Daniel-Rops, *Życie w Palestynie*, 182, the tradition of serving refined cake castles as practiced in Graeco-Roman Palestine might have dated back to the days of Hebrew slavery in Egypt, where the Jews apparently had learned the art of "creative" baking.

[889] See Fernando de la Granja Santamaria, *Estudios de historia de Al-Andalus* (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1999), 187–245, 208–21 ("Fiestas cristianas en Al-Andalus").

[890] See, for example, Jędrzej Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* (Warszawa: PIW, 1985), 231–4; Krystyna Bockenheim, *Przy polskim stole* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999), 67–8; Shephard, *Pickled*, 169. On European sugar collations, and on *trionfi*, see Roy Strong, *Feast: A History of Grand Eating* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2003), 194–9, 216–24.

The fancifully shaped hard sweets, eye-catching and trendy though they were, did not appeal to everybody. The local hashish users and who were also very loyal confectioners' customers, preferred their sweetmeats to be softer, sweeter, pleasantly nourishing, and drenched with honey or syrup. Dry sugar or marzipan figures was not what they really fancied—rather, they would go for a sticky *kunāfa* or *qaṭāʾif*-pancakes, which they could dip in syrup or molasses.[891] But they would not mind simpler things, either, particularly that simplicity went hand in hand with low price, an element they often could not disregard. So they loved cream (*qishṭa*) covered with honey, honeyed *zulābiyya*-donuts, figs immersed in *ṭaḥīna*, or ripe bananas covered with honey, syrup, or molasses.[892] For hashish addicts the proper texture apparently mattered no less than the sweetness itself.

There is probably nothing unusual in the fact that an addicted person dreams to be buried close to what he/she is hooked. No wonder, then, that Abū Miḥjān, an Arab wine-loving poet and a first-generation Muslim, desired to be buried under the grapevine. Abū Miḥjān dreamed of the plant's roots sating on his bones, and of wine washing his grave one day.[893] Ibn Sūdūn, a Cairene hashish user of artistic inclinations, wrote down his last will in verse, too. Inspired by Abū Miḥjān's poem or not, his vision regarding his own dead body is quite suggestive:

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[891] It is difficult to guess whether *qaṭāʾif* and *kunāfa* were the two most popular kinds of nutty sweets in the fifteenth-century Cairo, or just Ibn Sūdūn's favorites. All in all, either because of their competitive price, or because of their other special features, they were clearly a particularly important item on the diet of the not-so-well-off Cairene hashish eater. Praised in Ibn Sūdūn's poems, sold both by peddling vendors and in confectioners' shops which Ibn Sūdūn frequented, they seem to have been not only his favorite food, but also one of the staples. Of the two, *qaṭāʾif* seem to have been more attractive: lost in reverie Ibn Sūdūn asks a wealthy man: "feed the hashish people with *qaṭāʾif*, and have sweet dreams, as I do;" Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 50.

[892] Ibn Sudūn, *Nuzha*, *passim*; for discussion and interpretation of "Ibn Sūdūn's sweet nothings" see van Gelder, *God's Banquet*, 90–6. Interestingly, simple items such as *qishṭa*-cream or bananas with syrup or molasses were appreciated by the elite circles, too; see al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104 (quoted also in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210), where it is said that sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad relished a dish of cream (*qishṭa*) covered with molasses; for a record referring to the Ottoman governor of Cairo Khayr Bak consuming bananas and *qishṭa*-cream with syrup see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 357.

[893] For a short commentary on Abū Miḥjān's poem see Joseph Sadan, "Vin—fait de civilization," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. M. Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), 149.

O my people, when I die, shroud me with *kunāfa*s
Embalm me with sugar, and make of *bānīd* the covering cloth
Refresh me in *munīfīsh* and bury me in *qaṭāʾif*
And bury with me little bananas together with Egyptian honey.[894]

Actually, sweets were particularly frequent objects of the hashish users' hallucinatory desires, which was caused by the fact that a hashish session triggered an increased craving for food or, more specifically, an irresistible appetite for sweets. In effect, for the hashish users sweets were not less important than the drug itself.[895] Somewhat naturally, in time it became a kind of tradition in the milieu of the medieval Cairene addicts that a hashish session was inevitably followed by a confectionery session. The custom proved to be rooted firmly enough to survive in Cairo until at least the mid-twentieth century. Driven by the overpowering urge of satiating drug-induced hunger (known as munchies) with sweets, the contemporary nocturnal customers kept the confectioners' shops open long after the rest of the city had fallen asleep.

C. *Souring Agents*

Be it because of medical considerations or because of the local taste preferences, a sour taste was deeply appreciated and sought after in the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture. Juices of acid fruits, such as unripe grapes, pomegranate seeds, lemons, citrons, green apricots, bitter oranges, jujubes, quinces, sour apples, and sumac, were natural and popularly used souring agents.[896] However, the most important sour condiment of all was vinegar (*khall*), an impure dilute solution of acetic acid obtained by over-fermentation of wine, beer, fruit juice, or nearly any other liquid containing sugar. Strangely enough, vinegar seems to have not been appreciated

[894] Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 81; for *bānīd* (*fānīd*), or a kind of refined, white sugar, see above, p. 302. The meaning of *munīfīsh* is not quite clear. It is possible, however, that the term is related to *manfūsh*, a sweet, hard, Ṣaʿīdī (i.e. Upper Egyptian) biscuit which one has to dip in milk to make it edible.

[895] For more details on the hashish addicts' predilection for sweets as recorded in the Arabic literary sources see Franz Rosenthal, *The Herb: Hashish versus Medieval Muslim Society* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971), 14, 57, 65, 79–80, 94, 144, 158; also Marín, "Literatura y gastronomía," 146–8, where the case of Ibn Sūdūn is discussed.

[896] Interestingly, the Indian tamarind was almost never used in food preparations even though its sweety sourness is much more interesting and richer than that of lemon juice, verjuice, or sumac water. Considered medicinal, tamarind was, however, often used in potions.

in ancient Egypt.[897] Islamic Egypt could not go without vinegar and the medieval Egyptian sources, unlike those of the Pharaonic era, are full of references to vinegar. Medieval Cairene vinegar, usually sold by *zayyāt*, "oil dealer," or by *sammān*, "seller of clarified butter," could be of many kinds; "the best and the most beneficial of them was that made of grapes," generally known as wine vinegar (*khall khamr*).[898]

According to the prevailing dietary theory, vinegar was required in two cases: either when food was nauseating and bad for the stomach or when it had to be softened without treating it with the heat of the fire.[899] The latter category referred, above all, to pickled preparations in which vinegar was used to soften, flavor, and preserve vegetables. The sourness of vinegar was deeply appreciated in cooked dishes, too—excluding the so-called *sawādhij*, or "plain stews" which, as a rule, did not include a sour ingredient.[900]

Interestingly, using acid fruit juice or pulp in a dish did not exclude adding vinegar as well. Generally, vinegar was added in the initial stage of the cooking process, usually after the meat had boiled for a while and its scum had been removed; usually, it was accompanied by salt, Chinese cinnamon, coriander, mint, onions, often also by ginger, pepper, mastic, and rose-water. Sour could sometimes mean sour-sweet, as the sourness of vinegar or of a fruit juice could be balanced and enriched with honey, sugar, syrup, or molasses. The ratio of ingredients used to create sour-sweet taste could vary—sometimes the mixture was to be "as sour as it was sweet," while at other times the cook was recommended to take "as much [of the two ingredients] as he chose to mix."[901]

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897 As an Egyptologist put it, "it is a frustrating fact" that the ancient Egyptians, although their wines and beers turned into vinegar quite easily, "did not leave a single mention of this relish in any text we know." In the Egyptian context, vinegar was first mentioned as late as in the Graeco-Roman period; see Darby, *Food*, 617.

898 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 94; cf. also ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 58 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 78).

899 Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 163–4.

900 Judging by the words of al-Ghazālī who instructed "not to immerse in broth or vinegar the morsel which had already been cut with one's teeth," one cannot exclude that in certain circumstances vinegar, although probably improved by seasonings of choice, could also be served separately on the table, either as a dip or as a condiment. See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' Ulūm ad-Dīn* (Cairo: Dār ash-Sha'b, n.d.), II, 8 (Engl. trans. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 17).

901 *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 305 and 310 respectively.

D. *Oils and Fats*

While observing the eating habits of the Cairenes in the early seventeenth century, Johann Wild noticed that "they fry their fish in linseed oil and some Arabs drink it like water."[902] Even if there was some truth in this remark, it could by no means be typical of the local population. Generally, the city's inhabitants did not fry fish in linseed oil or drink it like water. By accident, however, Wild's remark pointed to an interesting feature of the Arabic-Islamic food culture, namely, its taste for oils and fats. Indeed, save few exceptions, such as pickles and some condiments, one can hardly find a dish category in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine that would not call for vegetable oil, butterfat, or animal fat of some kind.

Vegetable oils used in the Cairene cookery were by no means limited to linseed oil, although Johann Wild apparently thought it to be the most typical. Moreover, linseed oil (*zayt bizr al-kuttān*, *zayt ḥārr*) was considered to have been better suited for oil lamps than for food and, as such, was not liked as a food ingredient.[903] Cookery was dominated by olive oil (*zayt zaytūn*, *zayt*, *zayt ṭayyib*) and, above all, by sesame oil (*shīrj*, *zayt as-simsim*, *duhn simsim*). Ibn al-Ḥājj maintained that olive oil was the best and the most beneficial of all oils and that sesame oil came only after it.[904] But Ibn al-Ḥājj was a Maghrebian immigrant to Egypt and his point of view must have differed from that of native Egyptians. In fact, the olive oil, crucial for the culinary cultures of the Mediterranean, might have been appreciated in Egypt, too. However, olive trees did not like Egyptian soil, and Egyptians, unlike their Mediterranean neighbors, could not enjoy their own, domestically pressed olive oil. What oil was made in Egypt clearly did not match the Mediterranean standards. Strabo (ca. 63 B.C.E.–24 C.E.) asserted that Egyptians made much oil but, due to the fact that their olives were not carefully gathered, it had bad smell. Pliny the Elder (23 C.E.–79 C.E.), on the other hand, maintained that Egyptian olives, although very fleshy, yielded only scant oil.[905] Either bad and abundant or not bad but scanty, Egyptian olive oil could never compete

[902] Wild, *Voyages*, 179.

[903] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 100–2. According to Nāṣer-e Khosraw, lamp oil called *zayt ḥārr* was derived from turnip seeds and radish seeds; see *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 55. For discussion on *zayt ḥārr*, or lamp oil, see Moshe Gil, "Supplies of Oil in Medieval Egypt: A Geniza Study," *JNES* 34/1 (1975): 65–6; also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 434, n. 50.

[904] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 93.

[905] Darby, *Food*, II, 784–5.

with what other Mediterranean countries produced. And that was probably why olive oil never became as important for Egyptians as it was for Greeks, Romans, Levantines, or Andalusians and Maghrebians, even if its value was recognized in Egypt.

In the Middle Ages, as in the antiquity, the Egyptian olive oil production—if there was any—must have been limited to processing the scanty quantities of fruit harvested in the Fayyum groves.[906] As this was not much, most of the Egyptian demand had to be covered by import, mostly from Tunisia, Sicily,[907] Syria,[908] and Palestine. The Palestinian oil could have been the most popular of them. It was known as *az-zayt al-Filasṭīnī* ("Palestinian oil") or as *az-zayt ar-rikābī* ("transported oil"), after *rikāb*, or camels on the backs of which it was transported. Mentioned by Maimonides as well-known in Egypt,[909] the Palestinian oil was, technically—and in significant part at least—omphacine oil, or oil extracted from olives before their maturity. Its Arabic name, *zayt al-infāq*, is Arabic transcription of Greek *omphakion*.[910]

Neither *ḥisba* manuals, nor the culinary literature, use the term "olive oil," or *zayt zaytūn*, to designate olive oil. Instead, words such as *zayt*, "oil," or *zayt ṭayyib*, "good oil," are used. But *zayt*, although it became the general name for "oil" in Arabic language, was primarily understood as *zayt zaytūn*, even if devoid of appropriate qualifier. For *zayt* was—naturally enough—"what was pressed of *zaytūn*."[911] As for *zayt ṭayyib*, literally "good oil,"[912] it must have designated some sort of olive oil considered to be of a good grade or quality. It might have been a synonym of omphacine oil, or *zayt al-infāq*, a term otherwise very rarely used in medieval Arabic literature (and never in reference to cookery). It could also mean a relatively fresh olive oil, defined by al-Isrā'īlī as "close in time to the moment of its extraction from the fruit,"[913] as opposed to oil other than the freshest. Also, *zayt ṭayyib* could designate flavorful oil obtained from the first, cold pressing (comparable to today's extra vergin) as opposed to the so-called *zayt*

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906 Cf. al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 83; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, p. 120.

907 Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252–3.

908 See, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 94, where it is mentioned that merchants who imported oil from Syria stayed in Funduq of Ṭuranṭāy in Cairo; also idem, *Sulūk*, II/1, 226.

909 Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 100–1, n. 131.

910 Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 344; Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 100–1; for kinds of olive oil used by the Romans see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 166.

911 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, II, 35; Ibn Murtaḍā, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, I, 546; al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 344.

912 Cf. Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252–3; Gil, "Supplies of Oil," 67.

913 Al-Isrā'īlī, *Aghdhiya*, 344.

al-māʾ which, obtained by washing the remaining pomace with hot water, was obviously of much lower quality.[914] For the time being, however, it is difficult to ascertain which of these oils was identical with *zayt ṭayyib*.

Be it in the context of the street kitchens or the cookery books, both *zayt* and *zayt ṭayyib* are rather infrequently mentioned. As far the street kitchens are concerned, *ḥisba* manuals recommended that *zayt ṭayyib* should be added to side dishes made of turnip, to liver cooked in the *tannūr* oven, and to the pot in which sheep's heads were being cooked.[915] In the *haute cuisine* context, the most frequent application of olive oil was as a thinning and bonding medium for garlic pounded with salt, for fish stuffing, and for salted fish pastes. Compared to Roman traditions, particularly their intensive way of using *oleum*, this was not much. It seems, however, that even if olive trees were more successfully grown in Egypt, and olive oil was more effectively manufactured, this would not necessarily had increased the share of olive oil in the local culinary culture. For however beneficial olive oil was, it also had a drawback which excluded its more universal use: it had a low smoke point (200°F/93.3°C) and, as such, was not well suited for cooking at high temperatures. In the medieval Arabic-Islamic cuisine, where much frying was involved, such a quality was especially unwelcome.

Intriguingly, the low level of consumption of olive oil did not correspond to huge quantities of this product that were imported to medieval Egypt. S.D. Goitein made an attempt to solve the puzzle. But all he could say, after years of collecting and studying material referring to olive oil trade in which the Geniza people had participated, was that the publication of the material would not "contribute much to the understanding of the role of [olive] oil in the diet of the city's population of Egypt."[916] To this day, the question: "for whom were these massive imports destined?"[917] as posed by Goitein, remains open. Moreover, it is valid not for the Jewish community of al-Fusṭāṭ only, but for the whole of the Islamic Cairo. The fact that olive oil was used as lamp oil on festive occasions does not explain the mystery.

Be that as it may, as far as cooking is concerned, the medieval Cairenes, like their Fusṭāṭi neighbors, clearly preferred the indigenous and more

[914] Ibid., 344.
[915] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 160, 159, 172.
[916] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252.
[917] Ibid., 252.

expensive sesame oil.[918] With its smoke point twice as high as that of olive oil (ca. 420°F/215.5°C), the oil pressed out of washed, toasted, and husked sesame seeds[919] was more universal. Moreover, sesame oil was nice-smelling, had a nutty nuance and it was locally made from time immemorial. Although the earliest records of the use of sesame paste (*ṭaḥīna*)[920] and oil date back to the third century B.C.E., it is very much possible that Egyptians had been pressing oil from sesame seeds long before that date.[921] In the Middle Ages sesame oil was very much in demand—if only because it was excellent for frying. Recipes called for it whenever frying was involved—be it pre-frying of meat pieces in non-sour stews (although in this case fat of sheep's tail could be also used), frying of whole joints in *muṭajjanāt* dishes, or frying of minced meat, of samosa pies, or of eggs. The Cairene street fryers were required to use sesame oil, too. This referred not only to those who fried fish or cheese, but also to those who fried *zulābiyya*-cakes or sausages.[922] As sesame oil was expensive, it was tempting for street vendors to recycle it, thin it with safflower oil, or simply replace it with linseed oil.[923]

But sesame oil was excellent not only for sautéing or deep-frying. Its oiliness combined with a peculiar nutty flavor made it an interesting seasoning. Chefs could add it to meat stews, chicken dishes, oven dishes, condiments, puddings of various kinds, and relishes. Sesame oil could also be used as dressing[924] and as a flavorful bonding medium in various kinds of stuffings. However, the food category which sesame oil truly dominated was sweetmeats of all kinds. Sweets, cookies, biscuits, pastries, all needed sesame oil, either to be fried in it or as a bonding medium for the dough or both.[925]

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918 On the expensive sesame oil and cheap olive oil see *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 55; cf. also Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 30. For the prices of oils as mentioned in the Geniza documents see Gil, "Supplies of Oil," 68–73; cf. Goitein, *Daily Life*, 252–3.

919 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 332–3; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 189.

920 On *ṭaḥīna* see above, chapter II.8. "Nuts and seeds," pp. 293–4.

921 Darby, *Food*, II, 785–6.

922 Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 26, 33 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 50, 57); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 158, 160, 180, 207.

923 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 93; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 160, 180, 207; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 29–30, 189.

924 Like, for example, in a recipe for yoghurt relish, where sesame oil is boiled on a gentle fire with cumin seeds, and poured over eggplants immersed in garlic-seasoned yoghurt; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 398.

925 For making of sweets see above, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," pp. 305, 308–10.

Other oils available from the Cairene *zayyātūn*'s shops could not compare in the culinary usefulness to the role played by sesame or olive oil. Walnut, almond, and lettuce seed oils were almost non-existent.[926] Linseed oil (*zayt ḥārr*) was absent from Cairene cookery, except when it was used for adulterating more expensive, good quality oils. Besides, there were some recipes which recommended to wash fish in it.[927] The same concerned oil pressed of safflower seeds (*zayt al-qurṭum*) the consumption of which was, as folk wisdom had it, "detrimental for pregnant women, and it made their hair fall out."[928] However, it was quite effectively used for adulteration of both olive oil and sesame oil.[929] Pressed safflower seeds, immortalized in the name of one of Cairo's caravansaries on the premises of which they were crushed,[930] rendered oil which seems to have been recommended only once in the culinary context: in his *ḥisba* manual, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa instructed the market inspectors that fish should be fried in fresh sesame oil or in safflower oil since the latter was still better than turnip oil (*zayt as-saljam*, generally used as lamp oil).[931]

Sesame oil—tasty, universal, and lavishly used—did not fully satisfy the Cairenes' demand for fat. For some reason, they craved animal fats. Or, more precisely, for fat extracted from animal fat tissue, as butterfat was not what they really appreciated. Due to climatic circumstances, fresh

[926] Walnut oil and almond oil are mentioned in *Waṣf* in a recipe for sweet stuffed chicken and in a recipe for a sweetmeat called *fālūdhaj*; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 360 and 419 respectively. *Zayt al-khass*, or lettuce seed oil, is mentioned by Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 30. Ibn Riḍwān also mentions oil of mahaleb, ben, narcissus, spikenard, Arabian costus, mastic, and castor oil; these, however, must have been used exclusively for their medicinal properties; see Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 134.

[927] See *Kanz*, 94, n. 240; 96, nn. 246, 247.

[928] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 189.

[929] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 160, 180, 207; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 29–30, 189.

[930] Qayṣariyyat al-ʿUṣfur; see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 89. *ʿUṣfur* is another name for *qurṭum*, or safflower.

[931] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 178. Ibn al-Ukhuwwa also maintained that safflower oil (*zayt al-qurṭum*) was "*al-ḥulw*" (*Maʿālim*, 180). From the phrasing of the sentence it is not clear what Ibn al-Ukhuwwa actually meant by using the term "*al-ḥulw*." In fact, safflower oil was not sweet (*ḥulw*) (comparing to olive oil, it is tasteless), and had nothing to do with "sweet oil," or *zayt ḥulw*. *Zayt ḥulw* was pressed of ripe black olives (al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 344–5) and, possibly, matched Roman *viridum*, or oil made from late-harvested olives that were turning black (Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 166). In *Kanz*, "sweet oil" is used optionally with sesame oil or "good [olive] oil" (a recipe for fried unsalted fish, 96, n. 246). "Oil pressed of safflower" and "sweet oil" (occasionally adulterated by oil dealers with linseed oil) as mentioned by Ibn Bassām are clearly two different items; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 189. On olive, safflower, linseed, and sesame oils see also Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 120.

butter (*zubd*) was almost absent from the local food culture[932] and in the city markets butterfat was available only in the form of clarified butter (*samn*).[933] Unlike, for example, in Indian cuisine, where clarified and evaporated butter called ghee has been essential for cooking, sautéing, and frying,[934] *samn* was not frequently used by medieval Cairene chefs. It was added, for instance, to dishes in which the flavor of sesame oil might have been too intensive, such as rice cooked with milk, *kaʿk* biscuit, some omelettes, couscous dishes, and some sweetmeats.[935] Its actual position in the local food hierarchy was indicated in the ninth/fifteenth-century *Delectable War*, in which personified clarified butter, given a chance to speak, complained about its miserable existence: "By God, I have been shut up in earthenware vessels for years until I became rancid, and hoofs have been smeared with me so that I became putrid. And they made me a medicine for wounds and swellings, and the poor mended their soups with me."[936]

Unlike clarified butter, animal fats obtained from fat tissue were relished, particularly when processed into drippings running from roasted lamb or chicken. In such a form they were used as essential condiments for *jawādhib*, or sweet puddings typically made of bread, nuts, seeds, honey/sugar/syrup, and, sometimes, fruits.[937] In order to soak such a preparation with drippings, a vessel with it was placed in the oven under chicken or

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[932] Of the otherwise very few recipes which call for *zubd* one is for paste of broad beans, in fact comparable to contemporary *fūl* paste, and another is for a "dish of fenugreek," in which fenugreek seeds, left overnight in the pot over the glowing embers, are in the morning mixed with figs, raisins, spices, honey, and butter; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 381.

[933] According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, clarified butter (*samn*) could be made of cow milk (and this was "best of all"), of buffalo milk, or of sheep milk. The latter two, being naturally whiter in color than cow milk, were sometimes adulterated by dishonest dealers by addition of some dyeing agent which made them yellowish, so as to make them identical with cow's butter; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 95. According to *Lisān al-ʿArab*, *samn* was made of cow milk, but there could also be a variety made of goat milk.

[934] Ghee has a longer life and much higher smoke point (almost 375°F/190.5°C) than regular clarified butter. It is difficult to define whether *samn* was only melted (i.e. clarified) butter or, like ghee, also evaporated.

[935] *Samn* was also called for, although with no traceable pattern, in a number of recipes for meat dishes such as *mulūkhiyya*, *summāqiyya*, or *tamariyya*. In a recipe for a sweetmeat called *qāwūt*, *samn* is mixed with melted tail fat and sesame oil; see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 423.

[936] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 93–4 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. trans. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 6.). For a discussion on the story see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57–64.

[937] On *jawādhib* see also above, chapters II.1.D. "Wheat," p. 161; and II.2. "Meat," p. 203.

lamb that was being roasted there. It seems that a rather commonly followed procedure was that people prepared the pudding dishes at home and then sent them to the street oven to be baked and seasoned with running meat or chicken juices. Chicken or lamb that hung over their dishes was, most probably, not their own—it could belong either to some other customer or to the oven owner who, at the same time, was roast meat- or roast chicken-seller.

However tasteful, such drippings were but a condiment, and the Cairenes' appreciation for them could not match their predilection for *duhn alya*, that is fat obtained from sheep's tail. *Alya*, or fat tail typical for the fat-tailed breed of sheep,[938] was an anatomical detail the size of which always impressed the Western travelers. According to their accounts, such tail weighed some 25–30 pounds (11.25–13.5 kilograms), was more than one foot-wide and long enough to touch the ground.[939] The tail fat, unfit for poultry, fish, and majority of sweetmeats, was used in meat dishes and in certain biscuits and sweets. Cut into pieces and melted, it could be used for frying, added to a dish during the cooking process, or poured on the top of the ready preparation.[940] Quite possibly, tail fat was not used as a food additive only but, appropriately processed, could also be served as a separate condiment or dip.[941]

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[938] The earliest record of this sheep variety is found in ancient Uruk (3000 B.C.E.) and Ur (2400 B.C.E.) on stone vessels and mosaics. Another early reference is found in the Bible (Leviticus, 3:9); see Davidson, *Oxford Companion to Food*, "Fat-tailed sheep."

[939] According to Trevisan, *Voyage*, 210, the weight of sheep's tail reached 30 pounds; see also von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 110–11 and n. 1; Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162; van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 140; Harant, *Voyage*, 198; cf. Ashtor, "Diet," 130. The travelers' estimates may be somewhat exaggerated, though. According to contemporary data, the tail can account for as much as 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) of the weight on a 60 pound (27 kilogram) carcass.

[940] The significance of sheep's tail fat for the local cuisine was symbolically reflected in the part it was given in al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*)—namely, that of a wise and cunning messenger, "renowned for his elegance and stately appearance." Once placed in the frying pan, "the whiteness of his adipose layer was disclosed after he had been fried and the coating removed; and his scent became delightful after he had been boiled and cooked. And lo, his tissue proved immaculate, and his taste delicious. He then seated himself in his glass-jar cabinet, deigning to expose himself to view;" al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), pp. 88–9 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. trans. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 2–3).

[941] See below, chapter II.9.E. "Prepared condiments," pp. 340–2.

E. *Spices, Herbs, Fragrances*

Herbs are green, leafy parts of the aromatic herbaceous plants. By contrast, a spice can be a dried seed, berry, fruit peel, root, bark, leaf, or resin substance. As food additives, both herbs and spices are used in nutritionally insignificant quantities for the purpose of flavoring, although medicinal values which they are believed to possess have often been an essential motive behind their consumption, too.[942]

As long as they were obtained from indigenously grown plants, neither spices nor herbs incited particular emotions. Used according to the local habit and medico-culinary wisdom, they formed natural ingredients of food preparations. This was, for example, the case of Indian or Chinese culinary cultures, in which the use of seasonings was premeditated, meaningful, systematic, and unpretentious. The easiness and reasonableness typical for the use of spices and herbs indigenous to a given locality may change significantly with the use of imported items. The case of chilies aside, in the historical context imported spices usually meant Oriental (that is Moluccan, Indian, Chinese, or Tibetan) spices transported westbound.

Some decades ago, Maxime Rodinson stated that the fashion for cooking with spices had been inherited from the Graeco-Roman world and suggested that the rule referred also to the Muslim culture.[943] Indeed, the Romans were the first Europeans to eat pepper on a regular basis and the first to systematically import Oriental spices to the West. Moreover, it is possible that Roman soldiers, while marching across Europe and carrying spices to the northernmost and westernmost reaches of the Roman world, popularized their use on the continent.[944] But although the Romans

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[942] According to Graeco-Islamic medical doctrine, spices and herbs, as any other food items, had their individual properties which allowed one to apply them as remedies and which, at the same time, conditioned their culinary use. Discussing medicinal properties of herbs and spices and their uses in the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary tradition exceeds the scope of the present study. Presentation of medical plants known to the medieval Islamic world, as well as of the effects they were supposed to have on human health, is to be found in, for example, in al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 46–8 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 136–40); Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*; Levey, *Medical Formulary*; idem, *Early Arabic Pharmacology: An Introduction Based on Ancient and Medieval Sources* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973); idem, *Substitute Drugs in Early Arabic Medicine: With Special Reference to the Texts of Masarjawaih, Al-Razi, and Pythagoras* (Stuttgart: Wissenschaftliche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1971); Dietrich, *Drogenhandel*; see also below, pt. III, chapters V.2. *Ashriba*: syrupy "drinks," and V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*: quasi-alcoholic drinks," pp. 461, 471.

[943] Rodinson, "Venice," 202–4.

[944] For the presentation of the history of spices in antiquity see Turner, *Spice*, 57–97.

conquered the Near East, too, apparently they were not the ones who introduced the world of Oriental spices to Near Easterners. The Greeks did not do it, either, even though Greek medicine and dietetics contributed significantly to shaping the Arabic-Islamic medico-culinary ways. The Baghdadi "new wave" cuisine derived some of its inspiration from the Greek world, but the taste for spicing seems to have been inherited from the Indo-Persian world rather than from Graeco-Roman one.[945]

The correlation of spices with politics, economy, and medicine notwithstanding, the approach towards imported spices varied from culture to culture. They could, for instance, become an exotic object of temporary desire, depending on what was in vogue. In such a case, spices were often used unskillfully and in a haphazard manner. An exemplary model of this is approach of the Europeans, among whom a craze for Oriental spices lasted from at least the sixth/twelfth century till about the end of the tenth/sixteenth century. Throughout that time, spices, and particularly pepper, were considered an absolutely indispensable foodstuff, worth spending fortunes, facing the vicissitudes of traveling half-way round the world, and waging overseas wars. Using spices in Europe was a matter of prestige, ostentation, and, sometimes, *raison d'état*. But when Europe finally became sated with Oriental flavors in the late Renaissance and when blandness became a much desired feature, spices were rejected and reduced to a position of almost needless accessories, implying bad taste.[946]

The style promoted by patrons of the Ottoman cuisine was radically different. The Ottomans, apparently inspired by moderate spicing of the Byzantine cuisine,[947] made modesty the standard. This was, by the way, one of the very few gestures made by the Ottomans towards modesty.

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[945] As far as the Post-Pharaonic Egypt is concerned, it has been pointed out that there was presumably no lively exchange between the food culture of the urban Greek, Roman, or Hellenized Egyptian elites on the one hand, and the diet of the autochthonous Egyptians on the other; see chapter I.1.A. "Local tradition," pp. 69–71. As some kind of exchange cannot be excluded, it should be mentioned that according to the Graeco-Roman authors (Athenaeus, Apicius, Dioscorides or Pliny) the spices and herbs known in Hellenistic Egypt included anise, Ceylon cinnamon, Chinese cinnamon, saffron, coriander, cumin, marjoram, mint, mustard, pepper, thyme, and asafetida. Ceylon cinnamon, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, mustard, thyme, and nigella were known in Pharaonic Egypt—although it is difficult to differentiate between the medicinal, culinary and religious uses of particular items. For discussion on spices and herbs in ancient Egypt see Darby, *Food*, II, 791–807.

[946] Braudel, *Structures*, 220–4; see also below, p. 339, and n. 1017. For an excellent presentation of various aspects of spice use in medieval Europe see Turner, *Spice*, *passim*; see also Flandrin, "Seasoning," 313–27.

[947] See, for example, Dalby, *Flavours*, 43–52, 177–9.

In fact, the Ottomans never rejected exotic flavor—in Constantinople Oriental spices were considered prestigious ingredients, too. But, unlike in medieval and early post-medieval Europe, it was the moderate use of spices, and not overdosing them, that became a manifestation of status.[948] The Ottoman chefs seasoned food lightly, just to enhance its natural flavor. This moderate use of spices became a symbolic expression of the Ottoman culinary sophistication—it distinguished the "Ottoman" from the "vulgarity and lack of refinement" of what was "further south." Further south lay Anatolia with its southeastern part bordering on the Arab provinces[949] and, still further, the Arab provinces. Apparently, what the Arabic-Islamic menu offered did not necessarily fit the flavor preferences of the Constantinopolitan Ottomans—even though their cosmopolitan culinary culture shared many elements with the Arabic-Islamic cuisine. The Ottomans, as deliberate paragons of refinement and continuators of the Byzantine high culture, clearly depreciated what they considered uncivilized ways of their Arab provincial population, heavily seasoned diet included.[950]

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[948] Hedda Reindl-Kiel, "The Chickens of Paradise: Official Meals in the Mid-Seventeenth Century Ottoman Palace," in *The Illuminated Table, the Prosperous House*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2003), 83. The Ottoman restraint in the use of flavoring seems to be confirmed by other scholars dealing with the subject of Turkish/Ottoman cookery; see for example, Zubaida, "Rice," 96; Richard Tapper and Sami Zubaida, "Introduction" to Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 8. See also Pekin and Sümer, *Timeless Tastes*, 191, where the use of fresh herbs in Turkish vegetable dishes is said to be "generally restricted to mint with courgettes and dill with broad beans in the pod."

On spices in the Ottoman cuisine see also Feridun M. Emecen, "The Sehzade's Kitchen and its Expenditures. An Account Book from Sehzade Mehmed's Palace in Manisa, 1594–1595," in Faroqhi and Neumann, *Illuminated Table*, 97–8; Ogze Samnci, "Culinary Consumption Patterns of the Ottoman Elite during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," in Faroqhi and Neumann, *Illuminated Table*, 168. Christoph K. Neumann, "Spices in the Ottoman Palace: Courtly Cookery in the Eighteenth Century," in Faroqhi and Neumann, *Illuminated Table*, 127–60. As for the latter study, many of its author's assumptions, conclusions and assertions regarding the use of spices in the Ottoman palace are either disputable or deserve commentary, as devoid of historical and culinary context. Regrettably, the scope of the present study disallows polemics. It should only be pointed out that the impressive lists of spices that were attached to various Ottoman kitchen registers and that are discussed in a number of essays included in *Illuminated Table* might indeed indicate unusually high consumption of spices by the Ottoman court. Since, however, these lists are devoid of basic points of reference such as, for example, possible number of consumers of the discussed spice deliveries, or the way the spices were actually used, it is impossible to use these lists for clues regarding the question of Ottoman over- or under-dosage of spices.

[949] Cf. Zubaida, "Rice," 96; Tapper and Zubaida, "Introduction" to Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 8.

[950] In this context, one can hardly avoid comparing the Ottomans' insisting on restraint in the use of flavorings with the conduct of some French aristocrats who, fed up with the

Indeed, as far as the seasoning of food was concerned, the Arabic-Islamic cuisine was not modest at all.[951] In the beginning of the eleventh/seventeenth century a Western visitor to Egypt noticed that "they put spices in food without grinding them and openhandedly."[952] True, to some foreign observers the Cairene cookery might have appeared irrationally overseasoned. But the way the medieval Arab urbanites liked spices was not a result of their surrender to some temporary mania or the need to show off. For the Cairenes, like for the Europeans and the Ottomans, Oriental spices were exotic, too. While, however, the Europeans desperately tried to understand foreign ingredients and adapt them to their cookery, Cairenes, like the Constantinopolitan Ottomans, did not have to bother about such complicated problems too much. Both the Ottomans and the Cairenes used imported spices in accordance with the culinary systems they had adopted. While the Ottomans followed Byzantine guidelines in this respect, Cairenes simply accepted what the new wave Baghdadi culinary standard recommended and considered indispensable. As such, the Ottoman and Arabic-Islamic attitudes towards Oriental seasonings were surely not as genuine as those of Indians or Chinese.

The Ottomans, excessively concerned with trifles, were very careful to be perfect in following the rules of the style they adopted. As this style obligated them to season food lightly, just to enhance its natural flavor, they could not use spices in a spontaneous or unstudied manner. Since the culinary culture embraced by the Cairenes was more flexible and carefree, their way of using seasonings was not as mannered. Food in medieval Cairo was seasoned in an artless, generous, and, in this sense, natural way. In practical terms, this meant that the natural flavor of substantial ingredients of a dish did not matter as much as the combinations of added

pomp of Louis XIV's court, started to cherish simplicity so much as to invent the concept of "good taste;" cf. Visser, *Rituals*, 70.

[951] In her excellent article on the use of perfumes, spices and condiments in medieval Arab cooking, Françoise Aubaile-Sallenave studied three Near Eastern cookbooks (Iraqi *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* by al-Warrāq, another Iraqi *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* by al-Baghdādī, and the early sixteenth-century Damascene book by an anonymous author), one Maghrebian cookbook (*Faḍālat al-Khiwān* by at-Tujībī), an Andalusian treaty on agriculture by Ibn al-ʿAwwām, as well as some three works on medicine and dietetics (by ar-Rāzī, Maimonides, and al-Arbūlī). Aubaile-Sallenave's methodology allows her to discuss many issues referring to the use of seasonings in the Arab medieval cookery. Since, however, the cookbooks of the Egyptian/Cairene provenience were not considered in her study, Aubaile-Sallenave's conclusions cannot be uncritically applied to medieval Cairo. See Françoise Aubaile-Sallenave, "Parfums, épices, et condimets dans l'alimentation arabe médiévale," in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 217–49.

[952] "Because they are not expensive;" Wild, *Voyages*, 183.

flavors. Moreover, with the substantial ingredients serving as flavoring carriers and a pretext to use spices, herbs, fragrances, salt, sugar, and souring agents, the significant part of the natural flavor of meat, fish, or vegetables was efficiently suppressed. Such an approach must have been unacceptable by the Ottoman criteria.

While discussing the medieval European craze for spices, Fernand Braudel noticed that it "expressed the need to break the monotony of diet."[953] As meat cooked in plain water is nobody's delight, the need to break the monotony of diet must have been the main reason behind seasoning food in other cultures, too, apart from medical or spiritual considerations. Some cultures, however, used spices more liberally than others. An attempt to explain this gave rise to the theory according to which the origins of the excessive use of spices can be traced to the intention to counter the smell of bad meat or fish.[954] This concept apparently originated with the eighteenth-century scholars who looked with horror at the medieval cuisine. A food historian called it one of the great myths in the history of food,[955] and this opinion seems to prevail in contemporary discussion of the question. Another food historian logically pointed out that if this were true, the necessity of using spices would have persisted until the invention of refrigeration.[956] Instead, the mania for spices started to decline, for various reasons, as soon as the Middle Ages were over.[957] It is also worth quoting Jack Turner who observed that "anyone willing to believe that medieval Europe lived on a diet of spiced and rancid meat has never tried to cover the taste of advanced decomposition with spices."[958] The same author admits, however, that this myth, like many others, contains a kernel of truth. As a matter of fact, the problem with rancid, rotting, and bad smelling meat was not mythical, and spices were indeed used as remedy.[959]

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953 Braudel, *Structures*, 220. This was also the reason behind the nineteenth-century British enthusiasm for curries that, no doubt, was "fueled by the bland nature of British cookery;" see Collingham, *Curry*, 134–5.

954 See Maxime Rodinson, "Venice, the Spice Trade and Eastern Influences on European Cooking," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 203; Darby, *Food*, II, 791–2.

955 Fernández-Armesto, *Thousand Tables*, 155.

956 Maguelone Toussaint-Samat, *History of Food* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 539. It should be kept in mind, however, that before the invention of the refrigerator meat was consumed closer to the day of slaughter than is the case nowadays.

957 See below, p. 339.

958 Turner, *Spice*, 109.

959 See Turner, *Spice*, 106–19, where the European context of the problem is dealt with in detail.

As far as the Arabic-Islamic culinary culture is concerned, the thesis regarding spices as remedies for stench cannot be uncritically rejected, either. True, some records show that the techniques employed to counter the smell of putrid meat generally did not involve spices[960] or that spices were used, above all, to counter insipidity.[961] On the other hand, however, there are records which clearly show that the Graeco-Islamic dietetics quite definitely linked the use of spices with countering bad odor of food. According to al-Isrāʾīlī, for example, spices (*abāzīr*) were necessary not only when food was tough, tasteless, moist, and nauseating, but also when it was "disgusting and had a hateful smell which had to be modified."[962] Moreover, according to the Graeco-Islamic medical tradition bad odor of food was detrimental for human health; eliminating it became essential, and spices were important for this purpose.[963] Remarkably enough, while appreciating the power of spices as odor killers, the same tradition hardly encouraged generosity in using them in cookery. Al-Isrāʾīlī warned against excessive use of spices, and recommended "to use only as much as is needed to change the food's bad taste and its hateful smell, because overusing spices dries moisture from food, makes it tough, and disallows digestion."[964] What is interesting, neither the cookery books nor the manuals for market inspectors showed much care for that rule. Instead, both the *haute cuisine* chef and the bazaar cook were supposed to "use plenty of spices."[965]

The wisdom suggesting that "there should be thrown only as much of spices as necessary,"[966] as formulated by Galen, is universal. In the daily kitchen practice, the Cairene chef was usually given a relatively free hand

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960 Except for fenugreek, or the seed otherwise almost absent from the Arabic-Islamic cuisine. For methods to "revive" meat see above, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 188–9.

961 See, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 304, where the cook is instructed in the introductory remarks to improve the insipid food with spices; or al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 164, where it is explained that spices are necessary—apart from other situations—to eliminate the excess of moisture and add deliciousness to food.

962 Ibid., 164.

963 According to Galen (as quoted by al-Isrāʾīlī), "the food must not have hateful smell, [which is] harmful for the stomach, fumigating into the head and detrimental for the brains; nor must it have strong taste ... or hard body .... Whatever [food item] has these features should be treated in one of the five ways: with fire, or with water, or with both of them together, or with salt, or with vinegar and oil and spices;" ibid., 162.

964 Ibid., 164.

965 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 174; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303 (although the *haute cuisine* cook was instructed to be moderate in "*ḥawāmiḍ* dishes, that have their own broth").

966 Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 167.

as far as quantities of seasonings were concerned. In accordance with the flexible Galenic criterion, many recipes (though not all) recommended adding to the dish "as much spices as needed with it," or "as much as necessary on it," or to throw "salt and spices as needed," or "as much as it will bear," etc. Although such instructions may seem careless, it was not the case. The city cooks knew pretty well how much spices their preparation "will bear," if only because they usually specialized in one kind of food throughout their lifetime. Sometimes, however, the spicing norm was minutely written down, as in the case of the bazaar fish fryers who for every 10 *raṭls* of fish prepared in a deep pan (*ṭājin*), were obligated to add a precise quantity of spices (*abzār*): "1/8 *ūqiya* of pepper, 1/8 *qadaḥ* of caraway, 1/8 *qadaḥ* of coriander, 1/3 *ūqiya* of garlic, 1/8 *ūqiya* of sumac, as well as 1/8 *raṭl* of good oil, ½ *raṭl* of *ṭaḥīna*, ½ *raṭl* of lemon juice, 5 bundles of parsley, and ½ *raṭl* of roasted Syrian walnuts, crushed."[967]

However detailed the guidelines, the same dish prepared by two different cooks could not be exactly the same. The proper seasoning was a matter of the cook's class, proficiency, expertise, and honesty, as he could easily cheat on spices. His flavor preferences, his mood on a given day, and the local conventions mattered, too, as did his cleverness in avoiding cunning trickeries of spice dealers. After all, neither *abzāriyyūn*, or spice and herb retailers, nor *ʿaṭṭārūn*, or herb, spice, and perfume dealers and, at the same time, druggists and healers, were renowned for their honesty.[968] To avoid purchasing adulterated, recycled, or stale merchandise, an experienced cook, apart from buying at his trusted merchant's only, would know that "the spices had to be new; coriander, caraway and cumin—dry. Of the Chinese cinnamon [he should have taken] what was rough, thick, tightly coiled, and had a penetrating smell. Of mastic [he should have chosen] what was in large, white, lustrous grains, not ground small. Pepper should have been fresh and ginger untouched."[969] However, these general remarks, written as instructions for stewards and cooks, do not reflect the true complexity of issue.

[967] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56. In post-sixth/twelfth-century Egypt *raṭl* equaled ca. 450 grams while *ūqiya*, or 1/12 of *raṭl*, equaled ca. 37.5 grams; *qadaḥ* equaled ca. 0.94 liter (lesser *qadaḥ*) and 1.88 liters (larger *qadaḥ*); see Hinz, *Masse*, 29, 35 and 48 respectively.

[968] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 48–55 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 65–9); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 199–206; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 96–104; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 71–6, 92. For references to Sūq al-ʿAṭṭārīn in Cairo see Raymond, Wiet, *Marchés*, 91, n. 6; for references to Sūq al-Abāzira and Sūq al-Abzāriyyīn see ibid., 201, n. 4; see also *EI2*, I, "ʿAṭṭār" by A. Dietrich; idem, *Drogenhandel*, 17–18.

[969] *Kanz*, 5; also *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303.

The Arabic-Islamic culinary corpus assumed the accessibility of a much wider variety of seasonings. Their list would form the bulk of any guide to the Old World's aromatic plants even today. Except, probably, rosemary, lovage, oregano, and savory, one can hardly find a spice or herb that is not mentioned in the Near Eastern cookbooks.[970] The mentioned species include anise (*anīsūn*),[971] asafetida (*ḥiltīt*), basil (*rayḥān*, *ḥabaq*),[972] bay leaves (*waraq rind*), betel (*tanbūl*, *tanbul*; *Piper betle* L.), caraway (*karāwiya*), cardamom (*qāqulla*), small cardamom (*hāl*), cassia (Chinese cinnamon, *dār ṣīnī*), Ceylon cinnamon (*qirfa*),[973] cloves (*qurunfil*, *kubbāsh*

[970] The present study does not deal with the Maghrebian-Andalusian cookery books. For survey of the herbs, spices and fragrances used in medieval Maghreb see Aubaile-Sallenave, "Parfums," *passim*.

[971] According to al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 380, *anīsūn* was identical with *ḥulba ḥulwa*. On the meaning of "*anīsūn*," "*ḥulba ḥulwa*" and "*ḥulb*" see above, chapter II.1.D. "Wheat," p. 172, n. 174.

[972] Apparently, there were many species of the plant; see Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 38–9, nn. 47, 48.

[973] Cinnamon was doubtlessly the most popular of spices used in the medieval Cairene cuisine and, at the same time, an Oriental spice with one of the oldest records in the culinary history of Egypt. Some decades ago, historical records referring to cinnamon became a subject of a critical analysis by Patricia Crone. Crone's argument was based on her interpretation of the data provided by Greek authors (Pliny and Theophrastus above all) as well as on some secondary literature and included an assumption that "cinnamon" and "cassia" of antiquity were not "cinnamon" and "cassia" of today while, on the other hand, "cinnamon" and "cassia" of the Middle Ages were identical with those we know today. According to Crone, what today is called "Ceylon cinnamon" (Ar. *qirfa*) did not come to the ancient Middle East from Ceylon. Similarly, what is known today as Chinese cinnamon, or cassia (Ar. *dār ṣīnī*), did not come to the ancient Middle East from China. The two spices, Crone argues, were to be procured from plants growing somewhere in East Africa (and different from *Cinnamomum zeylanicum* and *Cinnamomum aromaticum*, synonym *Cinnamomum cassia*). See Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 36–7, 253–63. In this context, it would be interesting to know when the two names lost their ancient meanings and gained the medieval/modern designation. In Crone's study the question is passed over and, in fact, the answer may not be possible. The only source to shed some light—however dim—on it the problem is a chapter on cinnamon (*ad-dārṣīnī*) included in al-Isrāʾīlī's *Aghdhiya* (484–5). According to this text there were more than two varieties of the spice: "there is *ad-dārṣīnī* known as *dārṣīnī aṣ-Ṣīn* ['Chinese *dārṣīnī*']; and there is *ad-dārṣīnī* which is known by the populace as 'a*d-dārṣīnī*', and by the nobles as '*ad-dārṣīnī aḍ-ḍaʿīf*' [weak cinnamon]. And there is also one known as '*qirfat al-qurunfil*' [clove Ceylon cinnamon]. And as far as *qirfa* [Ceylon cinnamon] is concerned, there are two kinds of it (…)." What follows is a description of colors, forms, tastes and smells of all the "cinnamons" mentioned in the text. The problem with al-Isrāʾīlī is that it is often not clear whether what he said was what he had witnessed in the fourth/tenth-century al-Fusṭāṭ or what he had read in Greek medical works. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out that two of five kinds of cinnamon mentioned by al-Isrāʾīlī were related to the two East African species mentioned by Crone and the other two were identical with those we know today. The remaining one might have been just a cheaper, harsher, broken version of some of them. It might also have been identical with *malobathrum*, or

qurunfil), coriander—both dry seeds and fresh leaves (*kuzbara*, *kusbara*, *kusfara*), cubeb (*kubbāba*), cumin (*kammūn*), dill (*shabath*), fennel (*shamār*), fenugreek (*ḥulba*), fruit of the ash-tree (*lisān ʿuṣfūr*),[974] galingale (*khulanjān*, *khūlanjān*),[975] ginger (*zanjabīl*), licorice root (*ʿīrq sūs*), mace (*bisbāsa*),[976] madder (*fuwwa*), mint (*naʿnaʿ*), mustard (*khardal*), white mustard (*khardal abyaḍ*), myrtle (*ās*, known in Egypt as *marsīn*),[977] nigella (*shūnīz*), nutmeg (*jawz aṭ-ṭīb*), parsley (*baqdūnis*), pepper (*fulful*, *dār fulful*), purslane (*rijla, baqla ḥamqāʾ*), rocket (*jarjīr*),[978] dried rosebuds (*zirr ward*),[979] rue (*sadhāb*), saffron (*zaʿfarān*), spikenard (*sunbul*),[980] sumac (*summāq*), tarragon (*ṭarkhūn*), thyme (*zaʿtar*, *ṣaʿtar*), turmeric (*kurkum*), and zedoary (*jidwār*).[981] To these must be added fragrant parts of some plants and fruits, such as citron leaves, bitter orange or lemon peel, rose petals, aloeswood, camphor (*kāfūr*), mastic gum (*maṣṭikā*),[982] as well as fragrances such as rosewater (*māʾ al-ward*), ambergris (*ʿanbar*), and musk (*misk*), the latter two being of animal origin. Sometimes, the recipes called for some very local varieties, such as Maghrebian caraway, Maghrebian thyme, Iraqi musk, Iraqi roses, Syrian rosebuds, Syrian coriander, saffron from Byzantium (ar-Rūm), Byzantine (Rūmī) myrtle, or mustard from Acre.

But the Arabic-Islamic cookery books may be a little bit misleading as far as the use of exotic spices is concerned. Compiled of recipes of a very cosmopolitan provenience, they sometimes may point to items which were not used in the Cairene kitchens on daily basis. Many of them appear only

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leaves of *Cinnamon tamala*, now obscure; cf. Andrew Dalby, *Dangerous Tastes: The Story of Spices* (London: British Museum Press, 2000), 41–2; Darby, *Food*, 798. Actually, al-Isrāʾīlī's information may point to some "transitional" period when both "antique cinnamons" and medieval/modern cinnamons were available. Cf. also Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 77, n. 95.

974 See Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 74–5, n. 91; 166, n. 212.

975 On galingale, or *Alpinia officinarum* Hance, see Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 315, n. 398; Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 265, n. 93.

976 Dried aril of nutmeg fruit (*Myristica fragrans*).

977 Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 12, n. 10; cf. Perry, "Familiar Foods," 408, n. 17; mentioned by Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, 46 (*aṭrāf marsīn*).

978 *Eruca sativa*, a type of arugula, also known as rocket, garden rocket, rocket salad, rugola, rucola and roquette.

979 Translated as "rosehips" in Perry, "Familiar Foods," for example 384, 389, 395, 408.

980 Arabic term "*sunbul*" is applied to a number of fragrant plants or, rather, their roots. It can refer to muskroot, or the root of *Ferula sumbul*, known for its musky odor and a bitter aromatic taste. Its action and uses are the same as asafetida. Both "sunbul" and "muskroot" can also refer to spikenard, *Nardostachys grandiflora* (or *Nardostachys jatamansi*), also called *nārdīn* or nard, a flowering plant of the Valerian family.

981 *Curcuma zedoaria*.

982 Resin of *Pistacia lentiscus* shrub.

in few recipes. Such is the case of anis, asafetida, cardamom, tarragon, fennel, fenugreek, madder, betel, basil, myrtle, licorice root, zedoary, and turmeric, all of which seem to have been used only occasionally. Those, however, which are referred to particularly often must have been essential in forming the smells and tastes of the Cairene cuisine. They include Chinese cinnamon, Ceylon cinnamon, pepper, mint, thyme, coriander, cumin, caraway, ginger, saffron, mustard, camphor, mastic, and rose-water.

Apart from spices and herbs cited directly by their names, the recipes often call for enigmatic spice mixes known as *aṭrāf* (*aṭ-*)*ṭīb* (lit. "tips of scent"),[983] *afwāh/afāwih aṭ-ṭīb* (lit. "mouths of scent") or for *abzār/abāzīr*, simply "spices." Sometimes also the term *ḥawāʾij* ("necessities") is used.[984] Having discovered, in one of the cookery books, a precise list of ingredients of a mix called *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* ("tips of scent"), Maxime Rodinson hoped that it finally "answered an unsolved question"[985] of the mixture's contents. Indeed, one of the contributors to *Wuṣla* decided to define what *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* was. According to his recipe, the mix included nard, betel, bay leaves, nutmeg, mace, cardamom, cloves, dried rosebuds, fruit of the ash-tree, pepper, and ginger.[986] The problem is that the Arabic-Islamic cookery books, *Wuṣla* included, often use this term in an inconsistent manner.

In *Kanz*, for example, a recipe for *sūbya*, a sweet tonic and digestive beverage made of water, flour, and spices, seems to confirm Rodinson's definition of *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* ingredients, except that bay leaves and fruit of the ash-tree are not included in it: "and you take enough of *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*, and they are nard, betel, and clove wood (*ḥaṭab qurunfil*), cardamom, nutmeg, mace, pepper, ginger, and dried rosebuds."[987] But the same cookbook

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[983] Cf. the meaning of Persian *maṣāleḥ*, designating (apart from "affairs, occupations") spicery, drugs, ingredients, compounds of various drugs and spice mixes, but also "edging, hem, border."

[984] Cf. Perry's explanation regarding *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* and *afāwih aṭ-ṭīb*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 284. As for the term "*ḥawāʾij*," it is still used today in the names of particular spice mixes, such as *ḥawāʾij as-samak* ("spice mix for fish"), or *ḥawāʾij al-qahwa* ("coffee spice mix)." Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 160, uses the term "*ḥawāʾij al-baqal*." In *Kanz*, 196 n. 537, and Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 23a, the term "*ḥawāʾij*" is used in the meaning "spices."

[985] Rodinson, "Studies," 132, n. 5.

[986] *Wuṣla*, 518; according to Rodinson's translation of the recipe, it was "lavender, betel, bay leaves, nutmeg, mace, cardamom, cloves, rosebuds, beech-nuts, ginger and pepper;" Rodinson, "Studies," 132. Medieval *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* seems to have been comparable to *ras el hanout*, a spice mix the numerous versions of which are used in contemporary North Africa.

[987] *Kanz*, 162, n. 434; similar sets of spices, although not labeled as "*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*," are called for in a number of other recipes, such as the one for *ad-duhn al-mubakhkhar* in

provides also other definitions of the term: a recipe for a beverage called *fuqqāʿ* calls for "*aṭrāf ṭīb*, and their examples are pepper, *ʿuṣfūr* [possibly meaning *lisān ʿuṣfūr*, fruit of the ash-tree] and ginger."[988] In other recipes included in *Kanz*, *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* mix appears in various combinations which often include some of the ingredients mentioned above. From the phrasing of recipes it is not always clear whether they describe the mix itself or what was added to it apart from some of the ingredients enumerated before. Such recipes read, for example: "saffron, and *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*, and pepper, and ginger, and rosebuds, and mastic;" or: "pepper, and ginger, and *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*; or: "and you add to it *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* with Ceylon cinnamon, ginger and rosebuds."[989] Even more puzzling is a stuffing for samosa pastry that clearly calls for many of *aṭrāf*'s ingredients apart from *aṭrāf* itself: "parsley, mint, pepper, caraway, 3 sticks of cinnamon, 2 pieces of ginger, 2 dirhams of *aṭrāf ṭīb*, and cardamom, and cloves, and nard and betel."[990] Interestingly, two recipes which call for *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* in *Waṣf* suggest it was a combination of cardamom and cloves (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb hāl wa-qurunfil*).[991]

The term *afwāh/afāwih* ("mouths") is no less ambiguous. For instance, a recipe for electuary of quince recommended to "improve it with *afwāh*," and specified that *afwāh* were cloves, cardamom, nard, Chinese cinnamon, ginger, and saffron or, in other words, a combination comparable to that used in some versions of *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*.[992] In the same book, a recipe for *fuqqāʿ* called for *afwāh al-fuqqāʿ*, a spice mix which was defined as composed of cardamom, pepper, betel, and nard.[993] In another cookbook, however, a recipe for pickled eggplant recommended to sprinkle on it "those *afwāh*" which, in this case, included toasted caraway and toasted

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Kanz, 232, n. 654; for *khamīrat aqsimā*, in ibid., 158, n. 423; for *aqsimā malīḥa*, in ibid., 157, n. 420; or for *aksīr aqsimā* in *Wuṣla*, 504–5.

[988] *Kanz*, 150, n. 399; *Wuṣla*, 506, in similar recipe has it "*ʿuṣfur*," safflower. At the same time, a recipe for *aqsimā* beverage as included in *Kanz* calls for "*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* especial for *aqsimā*, and ginger, and cardamom, and cloves" and adds: "and [all] except for these three of *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* will blacken the preparation;" *Kanz*, 151, n. 401. The compiler of *Wuṣla* put the same in a different way: "*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* special for *aqsimā* and these are ginger and cardamom and cloves, and any other *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* will blacken the preparation;" *Wuṣla*, 509.

[989] Other versions are also possible: "*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* with pepper and dry coriander;" or: "all the *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* with Chinese cinnamon, mastic, salt;" or: "*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb* and pepper and ginger and mint and saffron," etc.

[990] *Kanz*, 53–4, n. 127.

[991] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 380 (recipe for *ʿads muṣaffa*), 382 (recipe for *sanbūsaq*).

[992] *Kanz*, 146, n. 391 (recipe for *maʿjūn as-safarjal*).

[993] Ibid., 155, n. 412.

coriander, salt, and mustard (?)[994] or ingredients which had nothing to do with the mixes discussed earlier. As for the term *abāzīr/abzār* ("spices"), it was just as enigmatic. In a recipe for *ḥummāḍiyya*, or a citron meat stew, the cook is instructed to "throw in the *abāzīr* such as dry coriander, pepper, ginger, and cloves, ground fine.[995] In another recipe for the same dish, *abāzīr* are "coriander, ginger and cumin, toasted and ground."[996]

Despite the impression of certain unsystematic or disorderly attitude which the absence of clear definitions may cause, randomness regarding the use of spices was not a typical feature of Cairene cooks. Judging by the recipes, the composition of a given mix could have differed significantly depending not only on the country or town, but also on the city's quarter, on the cooks themselves, and, finally, on the dish. The meanings of terms such as *aṭrāf*, *afwāh*, or *abāzīr*, no more vague than the term "spices" as we use it, must have been a part of the cooks' expertise and, as such, were perfectly (though variously) understood. All in all, what made the Arabic-Islamic spice mixes seemed to have been a matter of the local convention and not of a strictly followed definition. In this sense, these mixes were more similar to countless varieties of Indian "curries" rather than to precisely defined contemporary "herbs de Provence" or Chinese "five spice" mix.

The variability and unpredictability of the Arabic-Islamic spice compositions could have been related to the medieval Arabic-Islamic cuisine's general avoidance of the so-called masalas, or pre-prepared, ready-to-use mixes of ground spices.[997] The cook "only ground as much spices as he used, lest they lose their strength."[998] For the Cairene cuisine, India was not only a source of Oriental spices but presumably also an indirect source of inspiration regarding the way of using them. On the Indian subcontinent such mixes were also used only occasionally, as Indian cooks realized that spices not only lose their strength if stored in their pre-ground form, but also take different lengths of time to release their flavor. When coriander, which is slow-releasing, turmeric, which is quick to impart its flavor, and

[994] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 395–6 (recipe for *bādhinjān mukhallal*).
[995] *Kanz*, 15, n. 11.
[996] Ibid., 16, n. 12.
[997] The popular Indian "masala" derives, through Persian *maṣāleḥ*, from Arabic *maṣāliḥ* (pl. of *maṣlaḥa*), meaning "benefits" or "exigencies, requirements." In this sense, *maṣāliḥ* is synonymous with "*ḥawāʾij*" ("necessities"), Arabic term often used to designate spice mixes today. Interestingly, in the Arab historical sources the term *maṣāliḥ* is not used. Cf. above, p. 332, n. 984.
[998] *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 303; *Kanz*, 5.

cumin, which is apt to burn, are thrown into hot oil simultaneously, they tend to cook unevenly. This, in turn, brings about the risk of flavoring the dish with a slightly burnt or a slightly raw taste.[999]

It is difficult to say how well the Cairene cooks realized the subtleties regarding the flavor-releasing time of various spices. Nevertheless, as far as the Arabic-Islamic culinary theory was concerned, herbs and spices could not be thrown into the pot haphazardly. According to recipes, they could be added to the dish either in the very beginning of the cooking process,[1000] or gradually during the cooking, or at the end of it, as was often the case with *aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*.[1001] Spices could be also mixed with the meat minced for meatballs or with the stuffing for lamb or fish. Rose-water, camphor and sometimes, cinnamon and mint, were sprinkled over the ready or nearly ready dish. Sometimes some spices (such as coriander, ginger, pepper, galangal) were tied up in a piece of linen cloth and thrown into the pot, to be taken out at the appropriate time. Sometimes certain spices were to be pounded fine, sometimes grated, while at other times some of them were thrown in an unground form, a practice which surprised one Western traveler so much.[1002] Sometimes it was advisable that some seeds (such as nigella, cumin, or coriander) were toasted before using, while some fresh herbs, such as mint or green coriander, could be added chopped or in bundle—although dried leaves were used, too.

Although spices used for particular categories of food preparations have been discussed in the relevant sections, for the sake of comparison some basic survey should be briefly presented. And thus the set of flavorings used in sour meat stews (*ḥawāmiḍ*) usually included—apart from alliums—mint, Chinese cinnamon, coriander, pepper, ginger, mastic, and saffron.[1003] Very often, the finished dish was sprinkled with rose-water. Mint, saffron, ginger, and rose-water, always present in sour stews, were

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[999] Collingham, *Curry*, 142–3.

[1000] Which, by the way, harmonized with Galenic suggestion (as mentioned by al-Isrāʾīlī) to throw spices in "in the beginning of cooking;" see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 167.

[1001] On the use of seasonings in stews see above, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 191–3 and below, p. 336.

[1002] Wild, *Voyages*, 183. The instructions for stewards/cooks included in *Kanz* confirm, in a way, Wild's observation. According to these instructions, in "big dishes" pieces of Chinese cinnamon and galingale were to "be broken well so that their smell and taste come out; [if prepared this way,] only a little bit of them will suffice instead of using a lot;" *Kanz*, 7. This may mean that otherwise the cooks used significant quantities of unbroken pieces of Chinese cinnamon and galingale and possibly of other spices, too.

[1003] These were added to the dish after the scum was removed from the pre-boiling of meat—sometimes only a part of what was needed, at other times all of it.

absent from the non-sour ones (*sawādhij*), which were dominated by Chinese cinnamon and coriander, often accompanied by mastic and, to a lesser degree, by cumin.[1004] As for fried dishes (*qalāya*), the composition of seasonings used in them usually included Chinese cinnamon, coriander, saffron, unspecified "spices," occasionally ginger, pepper and mastic. The so-called *muṭajjanāt*, imprecisely but conveniently translated as "deep-pan dishes," usually required Chinese cinnamon, coriander, pepper, and mastic, too; unlike in fried dishes of the *qalāya* type, in *muṭajjanāt* caraway and mint were also added.[1005] Chicken preparations were generally seasoned with Chinese cinnamon or Ceylon cinnamon, dry coriander, mastic, very often with dry or fresh mint, sometimes also with *murrī* sauce. Sweet chicken stews, similarly to puddings and sweets, constituted those rare examples of preparations to which no seasoning—apart from musk, rose-water and, occasionally, saffron—was added. As for fried fish, its basic set of flavorings included pepper, caraway, coriander, sumac, and parsley. These ingredients were also fundamental in preparing fish stuffings and fish sauces, and formed a composition to which thyme, Chinese cinnamon, mint, rue, saffron, mustard seeds, and ginger could also be added. Sometimes, as in the case of a sauce meant for fried and salted fish, the aromatic composition of raisins, mustard, vinegar, garlic, oil, saffron, ginger, cinnamon, pepper, mint, rue, and honey was sharpened and enriched with galingale and aromatic spikenard. Fried salted fish could be simply sprinkled with coriander and cinnamon.

What is intriguing, the Oriental spices as used in various combinations in the Arabic-Islamic cookery rarely included cloves, even more rarely cardamom, almost never fenugreek and never turmeric. The absence or infrequent use of these spices, all of them essential for making most of the curry mixes, must have deprived the Cairene food of the aroma so typical of Indian cooking.[1006] At the same time, combining some of the Oriental

[1004] Unlike in sour stews, in non-sour preparations meat was often pre-cooked by stir-frying with spices, either in tail fat or in sesame oil. In some dishes, meat was first stewed, together with a part of spices and vegetables, until water evaporated and only then the rest of spices and vegetables was thrown in and covered with water.

[1005] For discussion on *qalāya* and *muṭajjanāt* see above, chapter II.2. "Meat," pp. 193–6.

[1006] Although it should be kept in mind that cardamom and cloves, almost always together, were often added to tonic beverages and electuaries. They were also ingredients of spice mixes (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*) which, used relatively rarely in food preparations, were more frequently added to tonic concoctions, too. On these see below, pt. III, chapters V.2. "*Ashriba*: syrupy 'drinks'," and V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*: quasi-alcoholic drinks," pp. 460–73. As for turmeric (*kurkum*), it is not called for in any of the recipes included in the "Cairene" cookery books. Nevertheless, it was not unknown: the *ḥisba* manuals mention

spices with spices and herbs of the Mediterranean, gave the Cairene food a particular flavor for which a blend of cinnamon and mint, perfumed with rose-water, seems to have been the most distinctive.

In Cairo of the Middle Ages, unlike in Europe of that time, ordinary people did not suffer from eating flavorless food.[1007] In Cairo, food available from the street cooks' shops was generally not much less spiced than that served for the elites, although the set of imported spices used for flavoring the bazaar dishes was likely quite modest. Moreover, an ordinary Cairene, while using the services of the street kitchens, could expect to have his food properly spiced. Economizing on seasonings, as any other market swindle, came under the *ḥisba* regulations and it was the duty of the market inspector to make sure that the street cooks spiced their dishes properly. Fried fish, for example, was to be seasoned with pepper, caraway, coriander, garlic, sumac, good oil, and parsley,[1008] while meat minced for sausages should be flavored with toasted fennel seeds, salt, toasted caraway and coriander seeds, ground pepper, and ground Ceylon cinnamon.[1009] The street-made *harīsa* porridge was to be prepared with "fresh, good-smelling oil to which mastic and Chinese cinnamon were added;" moreover, the finished dish was to be sprinkled with Chinese cinnamon.[1010] Even the cooked sheep's heads—not the most refined delicacy after all—should have been sprinkled with Chinese or Ceylon cinnamon and mastic, while

it as an ingredient used by apothecaries in a sophisticated process of adulterating saffron and as an item being itself adulterated by spice retailers with pomegranate skins; see, for example, ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 52, 59–60 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 72–3, 79). Turmeric was believed to have certain medicinal values and, as such, it must have been used for pharmacological purposes; see Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 325, n. 259.

[1007] It has already been observed that, according to the prevailing contemporary opinion, the medieval Arabic-Islamic culinary manuals were meant for the "cultured urbanites" of financial standing much above the average. As such, these books represent the "bourgeois" foodstyles the standards of which (reflected in collections of refined, richly spiced recipes) did not have much to do with what ordinary people ate. Associated this way with the Arab *haute cuisine*, spices became regarded as expensive by contemporary historians, who perceived them as a prerogative of the medieval urban rich. What probably added to popularizing the perception of spices as an exclusively elite item was the analogy with medieval Europe on the one hand, and on the other hand with the story of the Kārimī merchants who made their legendary wealth on spice trade. Cf. above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 1. "Cookery books," pp. 30–3.

[1008] Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 56. In fact, the choice of seasonings used for fish fried in the market did not differ much from that suggested for similar dishes described in the cookery books.

[1009] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 38 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 62).

[1010] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 176; ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 36 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 60).

roasted livers, the status of which was equally low, were supposed to be flavored with fennel, salt, dry coriander, roasted caraway, pepper, Ceylon cinnamon, and good oil.[1011] Similar regulations concerned other street-made dishes as well as bread.[1012]

Artless and relatively not fashion oriented, Cairene spice consumption could not always avoid constraints imposed by various external or domestic circumstances. Those related to the Indian spice trade were probably the most meaningful as the Indian spice trade was a business for which Cairo served both as a market and as a transshipping station on the Red Sea-Alexandria route. Bad harvests, losses of shipment, wars, tensions, plagues and other events which affected the flow of Oriental goods throughout the Middle Ages, must have had an impact on retail prices in Cairo. These in turn influenced the quantities of nutmeg, ginger, pepper, Chinese cinnamon, and Ceylon cinnamon thrown into the Cairene pots.

The flavoring habits of the Cairenes were first put to test in the ninth/fifteenth century when spice prices became considerably unstable due to the games played with the Alexandrian wholesalers by the Holy See, the Venetians, and the Mamluk state.[1013] Predictably enough, the fluctuation in spice prices intensified after the Portuguese discovery of the route around the Cape in 1498, an event which made European maritime traders avoid the Red Sea—Cairo—Alexandria route.[1014] But the process of abandoning the reefy Red Sea, and the transshipment in Cairo, was not

[1011] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 159, 172; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 43.

[1012] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 159–60. According to Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 23, the street bakers should sprinkle on bread loaves "good spices" (*abāzīr ṭayyiba*) such as white and black cumin, nigella, safflower, and the like. The same concerned the dough [to which] mastic, camphor, and *shayba* (*Artemisia arborescens*, tree wormwood) [should be added]." See also ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 23 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 48).

[1013] By introducing the system of state monopoly for spices, the Mamluk sultans Barsbāy (in 1420s) and Khūshqadam (who followed the monopolistic policy in 1461–7) contributed to creating significant insecurity in the international and domestic spice market. The effect of their decisions was twofold: one, the Kārimī merchants, until then chief spice wholesalers of this part of the world, could no longer prosper; and two, the price of imported spices was raised, as from now on they would only be sold and bought through the sultan. For details on spice trade in medieval Egypt, and on Kārimī merchants, see Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 370 ff.; idem, "Spice Prices in the Near East in the 15th Century," *JRAS* (1976): 26–41; Walter J. Fischel, "Les Marchands d'epices sous les sultans mamlouks," *Cahiers d'Histoire Égyptienne* 7/2 (1955): 81–147; idem, "The Spice Trade in Mamluk Egypt," *JESHO* 1 (1958): 157–74.

[1014] The route around the Cape of Good Hope was not the only one in the post-fifteenth-century world to compete with the Red Sea-Cairo-Alexandria route. Some decades later, the transoceanic route between Mesoamerica and Asia was established, with Acapulco as its main destination station. The Oriental goods, carried via Manila from China, supplied the newly-emerged Mesoamerican market and, above all, the newly-born Spanish-Mexican

as smooth and uninterrupted as it may seem to have been. In fact, the Indian spice trade via the old route experienced stages of revival before it finally declined. During some three or four decades which followed 1550, there were periods when the Red Sea ships carried no lesser quantities of spices as before 1498. All the loads were again transferred to Cairo, from where they traveled, as before, to Alexandria.[1015]

Actually, the prosperity of the spice trade via the Red Sea and Cairo came to an end only after the Middle Ages were over. The decline coincided with the Dutch dominance of the Indian Ocean in the early seventeenth century.[1016] But the Dutch were not the only, or even the main, reason for the development. What was even more important was that Europe, satiated with spices after centuries of frantic consumption, now changed its predilections. Spices became commonplace, and with time fell out of favor. What interested the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cooks was the salt-acid taste combination of classical cookery, based on oils, capers, and anchovies. Hot, spicy, and fragrant food, so appreciated in the High Middle Ages, was now condemned as overly stimulating and likely to arouse dangerous passions and lusts.[1017] The spice prices fell but at the same time coffee, having charmed everybody, became the most sought-after and fashionable consumable luxury (together with Indian fabrics). As both Europe and the entire Near East surrendered to the new vogue willingly and totally, coffee started to prevail in the domestic and international operations of Cairo markets. With coffee trade replacing spice trade, spice merchants steadily decreased in number, making room

cuisine. See Susana Osorio-Mrożek, *Meksyk od kuchni. Książka niekucharska* (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), 171–2.

[1015] For the vicissitudes of Levantine spice trade in the sixteenth century see Braudel, *Mediterranean*, I, 556, 564–8.

[1016] Braudel, *Mediterranean*, I, 562–3; C.G. Brouwer, "Pepper Merchants in the Booming Port of al-Mukhā: Dutch Evidence for an Oceanwide Trading Network," *Die Welt des Islams* 44/2 (2004): 221.

[1017] The new cooking style chimed with new scientific theories of digestion that envisaged the process as one of fermentation rather than combustion. In practical terms, this meant that foods that had previously been shunned, such as mushrooms or anchovies, were redefined healthy because they fermented easily. Spices which had been seen as useful fuel to stroke fires of the stomach, were now less valued. With nutmeg, cloves, and cinnamon banished to the realm of puddings and cakes, with sweet eliminated from savory dishes, and with alliums regarded with suspicion, European cuisines became much blander. In effect, in the end of the eighteenth century the normal fare in the coffeehouse was "a piece of half boiled or half roasted meat; and a few cabbage-leaves, boiled in plain water on which they pour a sauce made of flour and butter, the usual method for dressing vegetables in England." See Collingham, *Curry*, 134–5; cf. Strong, *Feast*, 140.

for coffee merchants.[1018] Paradoxically, now it was the Europeans who supplied Alexandria with pepper and Oriental spices,[1019] although the Cairene market itself was probably still supplied with the merchandise imported via the Red Sea and the Suez.

All the ups and downs of the post-medieval spice trade coincided with the Ottoman occupation of Cairo, the development which placed the spice-loving Cairenes between the rock and the hard place. On the one hand, the decreasing quantities and rising prices of Oriental spices discouraged them from continuing the habit of using the favorite flavorings in a liberal way. On the other hand, there were Ottoman officials who detested overdosing of spices, and whose example radiated down into the society, through Egyptian elites collaborating with them. The two factors gradually modified and transformed the Cairene cuisine, which switched into moderate seasoning of food, having with time become more Turkish than medieval Arabic.

F. *Prepared Condiments*

Apart from basic seasonings such as spices, souring agents, salt, sweeteners, oils, fats, *ṭaḥīna*, etc, food could be also flavored with prepared condiments. These included various pickles, mustard pastes, "lard" made of sheep's tail fat, and also a variety of fermented sauces. These sauces, typical for the medieval Arabic-Islamic cuisine are today forgotten by the urban cuisines of the Arab world. Two of them, *kāmakh aḥmar* and *kāmakh rījāl*, were used as condiments for bread rather than for cooked food. *Kāmakh aḥmar* was made of grains of rotted barley or wheat which, pounded and kneaded with salt and fresh milk, was left in the sun until browned and then seasoned with spices.[1020] *Kāmakh rījāl*, on the other hand, was made of yoghurt which, mixed with milk and salt, was left on the rooftop for four summer months to age.[1021]

[1018] See Suraiya Faroqhi, "Coffee and Spices: Official Ottoman Reactions to Egyptian Trade in the Later Sixteenth Century," *WZKM* 76 (1986): 87–93; Hanna, *Making Big Money*, 70, 79, 81. For spice trade in later epochs see André Raymond, *Artisants et commerçants au Caire au XVIII*[e] *siècle* (Le Caire: IFEAD, IFAO, 1999), I, 69–73; 129–36; 174–9.

[1019] The same, by the way, referred to Istanbul, as spices were distributed from Amsterdam all over the Levant; see Brouwer, "Pepper Merchants," 221–2.

[1020] See Perry, "Familiar Foods," 282; for recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 402; *Kanz*, 185, n. 501; 186, n. 502; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 24a.

[1021] See Perry, "Familiar Foods," 282; for recipes see *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 402; *Wuṣla*, 696.

The third and most famous of the fermented sauces was *murrī*, which partly owes its fame to the contemporary dispute concerning its nature. Since *murrī* was translated by Charles Perry as "soy sauce,"[1022] and defined by Lucie Bolens as "fish *garum*,"[1023] one would perhaps compare it to marmite, a British specialty made from yeast extract. Although in a way akin to these three products, *murrī* had, in its Near Eastern version, little to do with any of them. As in the case of soy sauce, *garum* or marmite, the manufacturing of *murrī* was based on the simplest ingredients. But because of the fermentation process involved, it was a long-lasting operation. The production could take from over two months to over five months and consisted, generally speaking, of leaving pounded unleavened bread (or its equivalent), mixed with rotted barley and seasonings, for forty days in the summer sun and pounding it three times a day. For the next two weeks it was to be stirred in the morning and in the evening, and then left for another two weeks. After this time some fruits could be added to it, or date molasses and honey and, finally, some spices.[1024] *Murrī* could be used both as an ingredient of meat dishes or as a separate condiment, for sprinkling the ready preparations, as in the case of *harīsa* porridge. Both ready-made *murrī* and *kawāmikh* were available from market retailers.[1025]

As for the condiment made of sheep's tail fat, it surely was much less popular than *murrī* sauce or any of the two *kawāmikh* discussed above. The unique recipe for this specialty is included in *Wuṣla* and inevitably brings to mind Central European lard, a nourishing, country-style bread spread made of pork fat melted with chopped onions and apples, and seasoned with marjoram and salt:

> take fat tail, cut it up small, and put it on fire; throw two or three large spoons of water on it, and cook it until part of it is melted; then throw onto it pieces of quince and pieces of apple, and a handful of dried coriander, and some dill, and a peeled onion, and continue to heat it on slow fire until all the fat is melted. Then put a piece of Chinese cinnamon into it, and some

[1022] Perry, "Familiar Foods," *passim*.

[1023] See David Waines, "*Murrī*: The Tale of a Condiment," *Al-Qantara* 12/2 (1991): 371.

[1024] For a detailed discussion on the condiment see Waines, "*Murrī*," 371–88; also idem, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 25; idem, "The Culinary Culture of al-Andalus," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. S.K. Jayyusi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 725–38; Aubaile-Sallenave, "Parfums," 217–49; Nasrallah, *Annals*, 579–82. For recipes see, for example, *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 400–1, 403, 406–7; *Kanz*, 63, n. 150; 64, n. 151; 68, n. 164; 69, n. 165; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 14a. The possibility of preparing similarly looking condiment of carob beans, molasses, cumin, caraway seeds, sumac, and barley flour in just one day must have been tempting; on adulterating *murrī* see ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 59; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 31.

[1025] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 59; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 31.

> salt. And when it is done, and the fat fries, add mastic into it . . . Then leave it until it cools down.[1026]

For esthetic reasons, one could also add some *wars*[1027] into the preparation, to "make it yellow and improve its taste." There was also a red and a green version. Considering the extremely high nourishing value of sheep's tail fat, such a relish, similarly to other preparations in which this kind of fat was used, must have been avoided during the Near Eastern summer time.

Of all the collection of prepared condiments used in medieval Cairo, the story behind the sauces made of mustard is surely most intriguing, particularly if examined in the context of analogies between the ancient Roman and the Arabic-Islamic culinary cultures. Mustard seeds (*khardal*, *Sinapis alba* L., *Brassica nigra* Koch., *Brassica juncea*), when crushed or ground and soaked in water, wine, vinegar, verjuice or must, produce a very particular, sharp and pungent flavor—provided overheating is avoided.[1028] Improved by a variety of additives, this flavor can be traced in all kinds of prepared mustards we know today. According to a popular opinion, it was the Romans who, by mixing unfermented grape must with ground mustard seeds, invented *mustum ardens,* or "burning must," and thus gave rise to the history of the condiment. But the Romans, invincible masters in sauce-making, were too refined to make do with simple pungency produced by the unsophisticated, two-ingredient blend. Thus the discovery of mustard's aromatic oil was soon followed by seasoning it with vinegar, honey, salt, pepper, lovage, cumin, caraway, coriander, mint, thyme, parsley, celery, and omnipresent *liquamen*. The resulting sauces, thickened with nuts, and smoothed by a touch of olive oil, set the tone for Roman roasted and cooked poultry, fish and meats.[1029]

The recipes included in Apician *De re coquinaria* are generally silent about steps to be followed in the sauce-making procedures—as one

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[1026] *Wuṣla*, 517.

[1027] Apparently, *wars* was a product of the leguminous plant *Flemmingia rhodocarpa* BAK., which grows in India, southern Arabia and Abyssinia; see Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 94–5, n. 123.

[1028] The pungent taste of mustard condiment comes from volatile oil which is not actually present in the seeds. It results from a chemical reaction which occurs when crushed seeds are mixed with water, vinegar or other liquid.

[1029] For the study of the Roman sauces as documented in Apician recipes see Jon Solomon, "The Apician Sauce—*Ius Apicianum*," in John Wilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson, *Food in Antiquity* (Exeter: UEP, 1995), 115–31.

historian put it, the book "was hardly compiled for the novice."[1030] Whatever the reason, this manner of recipe-writing makes it impossible to compare the techniques applied by the two cuisines. But it also contributes to creating an impression that the Cairene Arabic-Islamic cuisine, if it indeed had inherited prepared mustard from the Romans, surpassed the prototype by far.

In the Arabic-Islamic cookery books (or, in fact, the Cairene ones, as there are few mustard recipes in the Iraqi cookbooks),[1031] the recipes calling for mustard seeds are generally scattered throughout the sections dealing with fish sauces, pickles, relishes and condiments. A number of such recipes can be found in *Waṣf* and in *Wuṣla*, where mustard seeds are used, above all, as basic flavoring in turnip, eggplant, and cucumber pickles, as well as in sauces for fish.[1032] A collection of recipes for mustard preparations and sauces included in *Kanz* is incomparably richer than those contained in other manuals. As is the case with other cookbooks, the recipes are also scattered in various sections in *Kanz*. Unlike with other books, however, there is a separate chapter devoted exclusively to what could be made of mustard. "On preparing mustard: mild, hot and pungent,"[1033] as its title reads, contains eighteen recipes describing sauces, relishes or dipping condiments (though not all of them mention mustard seeds) to be eaten with fish or to be universally used. One of the condiments was to be served with chicken. Unlike in the Roman cuisine, there is no recipe for mustard sauce to be served with meat. The degrees of sophistication of these recipes vary; their common feature is soaking crushed or ground seeds in liquid while avoiding high temperature, the condition which was absolutely basic for acquiring the aromatic mustard oil.

Since medieval Cairenes fancied both rich bouquet and rich taste, their mustard recipes (most of which were for fish sauces) were quite complex in their flavoring ingredients. In this respect they were very similar to their Roman counterparts, although Roman ingredients such as *mustum*,

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[1030] Solomon, "Apician Sauce," 123.

[1031] There is one recipe for "mustard" in al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 94 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 196–7); and two for "vinegar and mustard" in al-Baghdādī's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 76 (sauce for fish), 80; and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 84, 91.

[1032] See, for example, *Wuṣla*, 665 ff.; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 390–2, 404, 407; also Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 16a, 23a–b, 25b.

[1033] *Kanz*, 173–9; interestingly, the title of the chapter and its first recipe are copied—directly or indirectly—from the chapter on mustard included in al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 94 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 196–7).

caryota dates, *oleum*, and fermented fish sauce called *liquamen* were absent from the Arabic-Islamic preparations. This deficiency was compensated by the addition of a number of the Near Eastern favorites. The most modest version of the Arabic-Islamic mustard fish sauce was made by diluting mustard seeds in raisins mashed with a garlic clove, and mixing the resulting paste with thyme, galingale, cumin, dry coriander, and anis.[1034] In a version which was to be served with fried salted fish, thyme, and galingale from the above recipe were replaced with a somewhat richer combination of asafetida leaves (*anjudān*),[1035] hazelnuts, Chinese cinnamon, mint, celery, and fresh coriander.[1036] Other varieties of mustard fish sauces were composed of similar sets of flavorings although rue, pepper, caraway, salt, nard, cloves, cinnamon, nuts, mastic, saffron, or *murrī* sauce—the latter apparently as a substitute for Roman fermented fish sauce—could also be added to the combination. Mustard seeds did not have to be diluted in mashed raisins. Water, vinegar, and a pulp made of raisins soaked in vinegar were equally effective. In the only recipe for a mustard relish to be served with chicken, mustard seeds are mixed with crushed hazelnuts and salt to be diluted in raisin and pomegranate juice.[1037]

Of the mustard preparations described in *Kanz*, those which are not included in the chapter on mustard prove to be particularly interesting. In the context of the Roman culinary heritage the most noteworthy is the recipe titled "description of mustard" (*ṣifat khardal*). The sauce for fish featured in this recipe brings to mind modern Italian *mostarda di frutta di Cremona*, a traditional preparation consisting of fruits preserved in a mustard syrup and originating most probably in ancient Roman recipes for storing vegetables.[1038] Unlike its Cremonian counterpart, the Cairene mustard was not cooked and, not surprisingly, was much richer in ingredients than the Italian preparation. The sauce, made of pounded mustard seeds which were macerated in vinegar, filtered and mixed with syrup, was enriched not only with whole jujubes and raisins, but also with a rich spice mixture (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*), saffron and almonds.[1039] Another dissimilarity concerned the way the two sauces were used. As garnishing plain roast

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[1034] See *Kanz*, 176, n. 475.
[1035] For more on the ingredient see Rosner, *Maimonides' Glossary*, 16, n. 18.
[1036] See *Kanz*, 175, n. 472.
[1037] See *Kanz*, 176, n. 473; 177, nn. 476, 477, 479; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 390–2; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 61, 83, 85 (Engl. trans. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 154, 182–3, 185–6).
[1038] See Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, XXIV/2, where turnips are immersed in mustard mixed with honey and vinegar.
[1039] See *Kanz*, 183, n. 496; the same in *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 407–8.

meat with a sauce seems to have not been practiced in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine, the Cairene fruit mustard—unlike the Cremonian mustard which was served with roasted or boiled meat—was put on a fried, cooled fish. These minor dissimilarities notwithstanding, a connection with the Apennine Peninsula is, in this case, indisputable—if only because whole fruits as a fish sauce component were a truly unusual phenomenon in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine.

Even more unique mustard recipe, however, is included in the chapter on milk preparations. Titled "*ḥālūm* cheese with sauce," it depicts a dish of unripened salted white cheese macerated in a sauce made of mustard, vinegar, rich collection of herbs and spices, garlic crushed with olive oil, salt, nuts, and *ṭaḥīna*.[1040] Salted cheese in aromatic mustard sauce did not have its equivalent in the Roman cuisine. Nor did "mustarded eggs" (*bayḍ mukhardal*), a snack made by covering boiled eggs with salt and cumin in the morning, and seasoning them with saffron (for color), vinegar, mustard seeds, mint and spice mix (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*) in the evening.[1041]

Yet another peculiarity of the Arabic-Islamic cuisine, if compared to the ancient Roman one, is that the former used mustard condiments not only as sauces but as relatively universal spreads/dips as well. Meant "to be served on the table together with all dishes," these spreads were, generally, far less seasoned than mustard sauces for fish or chicken, not to mention the one made for *ḥālūm* cheese. Their simplest form was the so-called "mustarded vinegar" relish (*khall wa-khardal*), a paste made of crushed almonds moistened with vinegar to which ground mustard and some spices were added.[1042] A somewhat richer version was prepared by kneading crushed mustard seeds with some water until their oil slackened and the bitterness went out. The resulting purée, covered with vinegar and honey and mixed with some ginger and salt, was sieved before serving.[1043]

1040 *Ṣifat jubn ḥālūm bi-ṣalṣ*, *Kanz*, 191, n. 520. Cf. Latin *moretum*, or flavored cheese paste, as described by a number of ancient poets. Apician *moretum* or a mortar mixture for flavoring cheese is prepared from "mint, rue, coriander, fennel, all fresh, lovage, pepper, honey, garum," to which some vinegar could be added; see Apicius, *De re coquinaria*, liber primus, XXXV; also Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 171.

1041 For the recipe see *Kanz*, 74, n. 181; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 16a–b.

1042 See the recipes for *khall wa-khardal* in, for example, al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, in Arberry, "Baghdad Cookery Book," 80, and Perry, *Baghdad Cookery Book*, 91; *Waṣf*, in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 404.

1043 See *Kanz*, 174, n. 469. Another condiment of this kind was made of mustard seeds blended with vinegar and honey to which bread crumbles were added. Mixed with crushed hazelnuts, the paste was salted, put in a bowl, and sprinkled with chopped rue leaves, oil, and salt. It was said to be medicinal; *Kanz*, 176, n. 474.

The peculiar pungency of prepared mustard seems to have been quite appreciated in medieval Cairo—so much so that, as one source indicates, the majordomos were to take care that this condiment was always on the table whenever food was served.[1044] Since preparing mustard sauces did not involve heating, one could easily make them at home. Nevertheless, they must have been available from the bazaar condiment dealers, too. However popular prepared mustards were among the Cairenes, they were surely not as common as in the thirteenth-century Paris: according to Alexandre Dumas, the freshly made mustard sauces were sold at dinner time by specialized vendors who would run through the city streets, crying "Mustard sauce!"[1045] Unlike in Paris, in Cairo there were no services specialized in peddling prepared mustard sauce. But as far as condiments and seasonings were concerned, Paris had not much more to offer than mustard sauce. At least not to ordinary people, for whom Oriental spices and spiced condiments were an unavailable luxurious eccentricity.

Afterword

The fall of the Fatimid dynasty in the aftermath of Saladin's coup of 560s/1170s resulted in the dismissal of the ex-rulers' cooks and contributed to the diffusion of the royal foodstyles in Cairo. What is more important, the firing of the Fatimid cooks—like the loss of jobs by the Parisian aristocrats' chefs and *maîtres de table* in the aftermath of the French Revolution—marked the beginning of the Cairene street food business.[1046] Interestingly, it seems that the next major dismissal of royal cooks in Cairo was of no significance for the culinary history of the city. This took place in 928/1522, when the new Ottoman viceroy came from Istanbul and, having moved into the Cairo Citadel, fired the cooks employed in the fortress kitchens. Unlike in the sixth/twelfth century, now such an operation could not cause any revolutionary change in the cuisine of the city nor could it contribute to its further development.[1047] By the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century the Mamluk art of cooking, apparently sharing the fate of the Mamluk state, was in decline.[1048] True, according to one

[1044] *Kanz*, 6; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 2a.
[1045] Alexandre Dumas, "Étude sur la Moutarde, par Alexandre Dumas," in *Le Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine*, "Annexe" (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1873).
[1046] See above, chapter I.2. "High and low cooking: exchange and diffusion," pp. 86–8.
[1047] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 493.
[1048] Dreher, "Regard," 80–2.

ninth/fifteenth-century source, by that time the sultan's kitchens in the Cairo Citadel were still able to prepare over forty kinds of dishes, many of which had their roots in the extravagant Abbasid court of Baghdad.[1049] It is very much probable, however, that apart from the famous names, the dishes cooked in the early Abbasid Baghdad and those cooked in late Mamluk Cairo did not have much in common. A cuisine needs to be cherished and cared for by appreciating and supportive gourmands and gourmets. The latter, on the other hand, need leisure, peace of mind, and creative inspiration in order to care for what they eat. And the ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo, shaken by epidemics, famines, economic problems, social disorder, and political unrest, was not the place for a refined cuisine to flourish. The war with the Ottomans and the events of 1517 made the situation even worse.

Whatever famous Arabic-Islamic dishes were cooked in the kitchens of the Mamluk sultans, it seems hardly possible that they could match up with their Abbasid Baghdadi originals of the past. The times when a state official employed cooks who mastered eighty fried dishes (apart from the non-fried ones), were gone for good.[1050] Judging upon what Ibn Iyās recorded regarding the late-Mamluk palace cuisine, all that by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century was left of the once diverse and refined menu was limited to *harīsa*, a meat or date porridge of country origin, *maʾmūniyya*, a simple sweet rice pudding, and *judhāba*, another sweet rice pudding soaked, however, with juices of roast meat or chicken with which it was served. Other specialties presented during the more or less official superb (*fākhira*) Mamluk food banquets included roasted muttons and fowl (and occasionally horse meat), fried cheese, sweets, fruits and loads of melons. If these were indeed all what the Citadel cuisine could boast,[1051] one should not wonder that the Ottoman viceroy got rid of the Mamluk cooks immediately.

By the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century the culinary culture of Cairo itself was rather well-stabilized, may have been even dormant in its stability. If it needed anything by then, it was apparently not the spoilt cooks of the old and outworn school but, rather, some new, fresh currents. Such as, say, those that came with the Ottomans, with their "subtle variations of treating the vegetables... and the simplicity which reveals the

[1049] Aẓ-Ẓāhirī, *Zubda*, 125.
[1050] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, 59 (the annal for 762/1360–1).
[1051] See, for example, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 151, 276, 379, 394; V, 331, 357, 380.

flavor of carefully chosen ingredients, the skill in the handling of pastry and the respect for fresh fish, the light sure hand with spices and seasoning and the generosity and perfection of the plateful of food set before you."[1052] Indeed, the *Eintopf* style, openhandedly spiced and prevailing in Cairo throughout the Middle Ages, was soon to fall into oblivion.

[1052] Lewis, "Turkish Cuisine," 121; Sami Zubaida seems to be perfectly correct while assuming that "in matters of life-style, including that of culinary matters, the upper classes in Egypt followed Ottoman aristocratic fashions, and only abandoned them to follow European styles;" Zubaida, "Rice," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 97.

PART TWO

ON EATING

CHAPTER THREE

THE PLACE TO EAT

1. Public Consumption[1]

The secondary literature dealing with the architecture, history, and social life of the Near East has introduced a significant degree of disorder into the vocabulary concerning the gastronomic culture of the medieval Islamic world. The problem involves terms like "restaurant," "inn," and "tavern" that, used by contemporary authors in reference to certain commercial establishments and private spaces of the area in question, do not always conform to historical reality. This in turn causes some confusion regarding certain aspects of the social history of the region, which applies to the Egyptian capital as well. Showing that none of the institutions mentioned above existed in the city, and explaining why it was so, should correct various misunderstandings and simplifications regarding premises of public consumption that allegedly functioned in medieval Cairo.

Of the three kinds of premises mentioned above, the tavern, due to the nature of what was primarily consumed in it, belongs to a slightly different category than a restaurant or an inn. In European culture, the tavern signifies a place where food and alcoholic drinks were served and where rowdy scenes occurred on daily basis (though these scenes, of course, belong in the inns, too). Thus the question of taverns—as various wine-selling premises in Cairo (and in other places in the Islamic world as well) are misleadingly but commonly referred to in English—is more specifically discussed in a later part of the present study.[2]

Before passing on to the proper discussion of the question of restaurants and inns in medieval Cairo, one point ought to be clarified. It concerns the semantic perplexity that arose in connection with the terms mentioned above—and "restaurant" in particular. It should be borne in mind that the West discovered restaurants, in our sense of the term, relatively late. As

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[1] An earlier version of this section was published as Paulina B. Lewicka, "Restaurants, Inns and Taverns that Never Were. Some Reflections on Public Consumption in Medieval Cairo," *JESHO* 48/1 (2005): 40–91.

[2] For discussion on Cairene "taverns" and other wine selling premises see below, pt. III, chapter VI.4. "Time and place for wine drinking," pp. 501–13.

late as in the eighteenth-century France one could only dine out in inns, establishments where travelers were lodged and fed; the menu, however, was fixed and served at fixed times. In the shops of the *traiteurs*, the food merchants, people were obligated to buy whole pieces of food (i.e. whole joints, fowls etc.) and were unable to eat on the premises.[3] The first European continental restaurants worthy of the name appeared in Paris at the end of the eighteenth century.[4] As for England, there is some confusion regarding the names of various establishments. The ale-house and tavern or a public house where liquor was sold and food was supplied for travelers, developed over time into the inn, an establishment (so masterfully pictured in *The Pickwick Papers*) that offered lodging for the night beside the drink and the meal. The name then started to be applied to a mere public-house, called today a "pub."[5] This accounts for the fact that the medieval Western travelers—whose relations constitute an important part of the source material used in the present research—were familiar with only two types of the establishment: the tavern and the inn. Therefore, applying the term "restaurant" in reference to the Middle Ages is an anachronism, apart from the fact that it causes much misunderstanding. In general, restaurants are places where food, ordered *à la carte*, is served to the paying customer who can sit and eat his meal in an eating space.

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[3] So that—as Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, a famous French gourmet, observed—"those [of the strangers] who had not the good luck to be invited to some wealthy house left the great city without knowing the resources and delights of Parisian cuisine;" see Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût, ou méditations de gastronomie transcendante* (Paris: Charpentier, 1842), 283; also quoted in Montagné, *New Larousse Gastronomique*, entry "Restaurant." See also Jean-Robert Pitte, "The Rise of the Restaurant," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 472–5.

[4] This was a shop opened by a man named Boulanger near the Louvre in 1765. There he sold what he called *restaurants* or *bouillons restaurants*—that is, meat-based consommés intended to "restore" a person's strength. In the following years restaurateurs set up shops everywhere. The dishes that could be ordered in these establishments were listed on a framed piece of paper, and at the end of the dinner the customer was presented with a check listing what he had ordered. Interestingly, it was not until 1835 that the dictionary of the Académie Française recognized the word "restaurant" as designating the establishment of a restaurateur; see Pitte, "The Rise of the Restaurant," 474–5. Cf. the description of the French restaurant in Cairo as recorded by al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, III, 15.

[5] Cf. Montagné, *New Larousse Gastronomique*, entry "Restaurant;" also *Encyclopedia Britannica*, New York 1910 (11th edition), entries "Club," "Inn and Innkeeper," "Public house," and "Tavern." However, as early as in the eighteenth-century London had a respectable number of taverns unlike those found elsewhere in Europe. These high-class establishments served dinner together with a glass of claret, sherry, or port. Their customers were gentlemen of the upper middle class and aristocracy, especially members of Parliament; see Pitte, "The Rise of the Restaurant," 473.

As discussed earlier, medieval Cairenes, for various reasons, generally did not cook at home—for the majority of the city's inhabitants, the easiest—if not the only—way to get a warm meal was to buy ready-made food in the street. It is impossible to estimate today how many cooks were in the city—the group, however, was numerous enough to have shocked many Western visitors to Cairo who perceived the local street kitchens and their employees as one of the characteristic marks of the city, together with the water carriers and the Cairo poor.[6] Not surprisingly, it rarely happened that a foreign traveler failed to mention the cooks in his travel accounts. Almost never, however, would he notice, much less attend, a public place where food was served.

While commenting on the question of restaurants in medieval Cairo, Robert Irwin states they were "more or less unknown."[7] Indeed, the dish ordered or bought from any of the countless city street kitchens was usually put in a pot or a special meal carrier[8] and delivered, by servants and cooks' boys, to various places to be consumed there. Naturally enough, these differed according to one's social status: while generally the rich ate at their villas, the middle- and the working-class, including various officials, shopkeepers, and craftsmen as well as workers, helpers, servants etc., ate either at home or in the shop or workshops. The poor and homeless, having not much choice, used to eat their food either at the cook's stand or directly on the street atop a piece of leather.[9] A hall (*qāʿa*) in Ḥārat ar-Rūm, mentioned (ca. 587/1191) by al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, where a group of people was to "gather and have their lunch on a Ramadan day there, and nobody told them a word,"[10] can by no means designate any public commercial eating-house—this record, apparently based on a hearsay, was to complement the author's list of sinful activities practiced and tolerated in certain areas of Cairo.

The only record that makes one think of a restaurant in the context of medieval Cairo may be that by Domenico Trevisan. In the travel account

[6] On the street kitchens of Cairo see above, pt. I, chapter I.3. "Street food business."

[7] Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights. A Companion* (London: Allen Lane. The Penguin Press, 1994), 127.

[8] For a short discussion on meal carriers or *porte-manger* boxes see above, pt. I, chapter I.5. "Customers," pp. 125–6.

[9] We can assume that the people who, as a European traveler put it, "spread a skin on the ground, placed a vessel with food in the center, and sat around on the ground with legs crossed or squatting," belonged to the lowest stratum of the city's population. See Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49; Dopp, "Le Caire," pt. I, *BSRGE* 23 (1950): 117–49; Fabri, *Voyage*, 109.

[10] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 24.

of this Venetian ambassador who visited the city in 1512 (i.e. over quarter of a millennium before the restaurant was invented in Paris), we read that "the Moors do not eat at home; they enter one of those boutiques and they take their meal. When one passes by the shops, one breathes in a nauseating smell."[11] What Trevisan meant by "boutiques" could not constitute any kind of larger eating-houses; rather, they were, with much probability, similar to (if not identical with) al-Maqrīzī's *ḥawānīt aṭ-ṭabbākhīn*, the "cooks' shops," where only one dish (apparently of a rather mediocre quality) was cooked and where the city's poor (*al-fuqarāʾ*) ate their food from the earthenware bowls.[12] Al-Maqrīzī's remark, suggesting that these facilities' category was below the level acceptable even for ordinary middle-class Cairenes, allows us to infer they could be nothing more than small poor-quality cook's shops, with bare soil or just a mat or piece of leather spread on the ground, and, possibly, jug of water in the corner.

"The Story of Wazīr Nūr ad-Dīn and His Brother Shams ad-Dīn," where a servant is rebuked and beaten for taking the *wazīr's* son to a Damascene cook's shop (*dukkān aṭ-ṭabbākh*), seems to confirm the inferior status of at least some of the street cooks' shops. True, the two ate the most deliciously prepared pomegranate dish there, but in general the contempt towards such places could be tantamount to poor quality, which might explain Trevisan's feeling of nauseating smell and Jean Thenaud's horror with the degree of dirt that prevailed in the street kitchens.[13] The two travelers' disgust, not always shared by other Westerners,[14] can hardly be used to confirm definitely the mediocre quality of the bazaar kitchens in general. In fact, these facilities were, naturally enough, of various quality and served various classes of the Cairo population. It seems, however, that it was only the poor who used some of them as "restaurants" and that it

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[11] Trevisan, *Relation*, 210.

[12] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 95. Cf. Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's remark that cooks are to wash with the clean water and potash the vessels from which people eat; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 174.

[13] Thenaud, *Voyage*, 47. Trevisan, *Relation*, 210. For Muṣṭafā ʿAlī of Gallipoli, a Turkish historian who visited Cairo in 1599, the food that was cooked in the bazaars was indigestible; see *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 41; Johann Wild (in Cairo in the early seventeenth century), complained, too: "The Arab [canteen] cooks prepare the food unconcernedly [about cleanliness] and carelessly so that I was not very eager to eat their food;" see Wild, *Voyages*, 179.

[14] Indeed, some of the Western visitors, including Mikołaj Radziwiłł (*Peregrynacja*, 91) or Pero Tafur (*Travels*, 73), liked the local food. Von Bretten (*Voyages*, 62), did not complain, either. Sigoli, on the other hand, appreciated the services of the Alexandrian street cooks, and the cleanliness of their cooking (Sigoli, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 162).

was the lowest-grade of the street cooks' shops that the poor dared or were allowed to enter. Thus *ḥawānīt aṭ-ṭabbākhīn*, with their miserable clientele were, most probably, the only kind of public eating-houses in medieval Cairo and the only premises that, with much indulgence, could be called "restaurants." However, it should be kept in mind that the establishments' style, services, and their one-dish menu resembled those of a soup-kitchen, or some of the Roman *tabernae*[15] rather than of the restaurants as we know them.

Interestingly, what Edward Lane observed during his first stay in Egypt (1833–1835) seems to be very consistent with the above conclusions and, as such, may point to unusual persistence of the Cairenes' habits and customs related to eating. As it becomes apparent from Lane's account, by the mid-nineteenth century certain ways of Cairene behavior were still very much like those of their medieval ancestors: the rich consumed their food at home, tradespeople in their shops, and eating at the street cook's was generally avoided.[16] Moreover, it was still only the poor who used the services of their quasi-restaurants, the status of which remained invariably low: "many persons of the lower orders eat at the shop of the 'fatatiree' (or seller of fateerehs), or at that of the 'fowwal' (or bean-seller)."[17]

In the light of the above observations it becomes intriguing that the inhabitants of medieval Baghdad might not share the problems of the Cairenes. For, according to the opinion presented by a number of scholars,[18] the inhabitants of the urban centers of the Abbasid empire could, and often did, eat their meals in restaurants. This claim, resting partly on ʿĪsā Ibn

[15] The *taberna*, something akin to modern inn if placed along the roads that radiated from Rome, signified a booth, a wine-shop, or an eating-house if it was located in the city itself; cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, entry "Inn and Innkeeper." For details on the Roman *tabernae* see, for example, Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 41–5 and Tönnes Kleberg, *Hôtels, Restaurants et cabarets dans l'antiquité romaine* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1957), *passim*.

[16] See a remark on p. 327 ("the common habit which the tradespeople have of eating in their shops") and 320–1 ("many cook's shops, where kebab and various other dishes are cooked and sold; but it is seldom that persons eat at these shops, generally sending to them for provisions . . . . Shopkeepers often procure their breakfast or dinner from one of these cooks, who are called 'tabbakhs'.").

[17] Lane, *Manners*, 320–1. One of the few elements that distinguished Lane's picture from the medieval one was the menu of the poor, who through the ages apparently replaced the broth and salted fish with the *faṭīra*. See also p. 156, where Lane observes that around the noon-prayer time the tradesman "eats a light meal, such as a plate of kebab and a cake of bread (which a boy or maid daily brings from his house or procures in the market), or some bread and cheese or pickles, etc., which are carried about the streets for sale."

[18] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 152; Mazaheri, *Życie codzienne*, 157; *EI*[2], II, "Ghidhāʾ" by M. Rodinson.

Hishām's adventures pictured by Aḥmad Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī in his "Al-Maqāma al-Baghdādiyya," and partly on al-Muqaddasī's account on *harīsa*-makers' shops, merits comment.

As for M. Ahsan's assertion (made in the context of the shops selling *harīsa*) that "the proprietor of the restaurant provided the customers with perfect waiting service,"[19] it should be taken with a degree of caution. One ought to bear in mind that al-Muqaddasī's account of *harīsa*-makers' shops (*dakākīn al-harrāsīn*), on whose upper floor there where "mats, tables, *murrī* sauce,[20] servants, basins (vessels), jugs and potash [*ushnān*],[21] and if a man entered the place, it cost him a *dāniq*,"[22] referred to the celebration of date harvest and the time of arrival of the fruit loads to al-Wāsiṭ. Applying this description to day-to-day life in the entire Abbasid Empire does not seem to be fully justified;[23] nor is calling the establishment with a fixed price and one-item menu a "restaurant."

Though ʿĪsā Ibn Hishām's story deals with a quite different type of establishment, similar conclusions may be applied to it. The Baghdad shop where ʿĪsā Ibn Hishām ate his meal possesses features that made it profoundly different from both the *harīsa* shops of al-Wāsiṭ and the cooks' establishments in the Egyptian capital. These features include, above all, the possibility to eat in—though, unlike the customers of some of the *harīsa* shops, ʿIsā apparently did not go upstairs with his food, nor was he asked to pay a fixed fee before he ate it; the check, whose value clearly depended on the size of the order, was settled after consumption. Moreover, the *shawwāʾ*'s (or roasted-meat seller's) shop in Baghdad, unlike the *ḥawānīt aṭ-ṭabbākhīn* in Cairo, was clearly not designed to serve as the fast-food place for the poor, nor was it considered as being of inferior status: the customers must have come from middle- and upper middle-class,

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[19] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 152.

[20] For details on *murrī* sauce see above, pt. I, chapter II.9.E. "Prepared condiments," p. 341.

[21] Potash, an impure form of potassium carbonate (K2CO3), or the water-soluble fraction of wood ash, has been used since antiquity in the manufacture of glass, ceremics, soap, fabric whitener, and as a fertilizer. In the medieval Near and Middle East it was used for washing hands and, sometimes, mouths.

[22] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 129. *Dāniq* was a small ancient coin, 1/8 of a dirham.

[23] As for the two-storied structure of the shop's edifice, it was not an unusual architectural style in Iraq; cf., for instance, the two-storied wine-hall (*daskara*) in ʻna from al-Wāsiṭī's illustrations to *Maqāmāt* of al-Harīrī (the miniature has been studied in detail by Guthrie, *Arab Social Life*, 182). The same *daskara* was pictured by a Syrian artist in an entirely different style; see Esin Atil, *Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 258, ill. 6.

for Ibn Hishām's complicated order reveals that the food was of the highest quality. The menu itself—against the common reading of the story—seems, however, to have been a one-item menu. Though Ibn Hishām's sophisticated demands concerning the carefully roasted meat with sumac sauce and masterfully prepared nut and almond cakes suggest there was an assortment of dishes on offer, in fact both the meat and sweets appear to be two parts of one dish.[24]

So, did the inhabitants of medieval Baghdad share the problems of the Cairenes, or did they not? The answer is twofold. On the one hand, neither of the two examples points to the existence in Baghdad of what might be called a "restaurant." We might even consider a cautious hypothesis that the city of Baghdad, like the city of Cairo, could not really boast an establishment that might be called a "restaurant." The other side of the issue is, however, that the Baghdadis (and probably the Iraqi townsmen in general), unlike the Cairenes, apparently enjoyed eating out. Whatever the similarities or dissimilarities between the two food cultures, one should keep in mind, while making this kind of comparisons, that Cairo and Baghdad, with their unique local features and very individual social histories, were as different as two cities of one civilization can be. And, some obvious similarities notwithstanding, simple analogies should not be made between these cities in almost any area of research.

The gastronomic tradition and customs of their societies are not an exception here. Their own cultural heritage, the distinct origins of their social habits, and the peculiar attitude of their rulers gave the Baghdadis, since the early days of their city's history, the possibility to enjoy going out to spend their evenings in the famous wine-houses and "taverns" located along the banks of the Tigris River. That being so, it seems reasonable to assume that going out to have one's meal—even if it was only the roasted-meat seller's shop—had to come naturally for somebody who customarily went out to have his drinks in a commercial establishment (or who was at least just a witness of such practice). Cairenes, however, had to wait until the sixteenth century, when coffeehouses appeared, to spend their pastime

[24] So even this establishment, commonly perceived to be a multi-item menu restaurant, should not be regarded as such. For the discussion on the food (*judhāba* and *lawzīnaj*) served to ʿĪsā Ibn Hishām see Perry, "What to Order," 219–23. To split the hair further, though, one may observe that even if the meat was essential for preparing the sweet almond pudding (while in the oven, it was put under the roasted meat to catch running fat and meat juices), the two were served separately and ordering one might not necessarily obligate the customer to order the other as well.

out. It is possible that the popular pre-Islamic Mesopotamian tradition of drinking out could have paved the way to functioning of the public eating-premises in Abbasid Baghdad, and that medieval Cairenes did not have a similar pattern which to follow.[25] These circumstances are far from explaining, though, why in nineteenth-century Cairo, when going out to have coffee was already a deep-rooted habit, nobody cared to eat out.

What then were the deeper reasons behind the absence of restaurants in medieval Cairo? While commenting on the importance of culinary manuals for the studies on Arab-Islamic domestic life, David Waines, an unquestioned authority on Middle Eastern and Andalusian culinary traditions, set the Arab customs of entertainment against those of China, where the practice of eating together in public places, such as restaurants and tea houses, was well-established. Waines' interpretation of the reasons behind the Arab-Chinese dissimilarities is that the Arab "hospitality of the table, whether with family, friends, political allies or others was a matter of the private, not the public domain."[26]

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[25] There is no room here to explore the question the way it deserves, but a short explanation is indispensable. The ancient Egyptians drank a lot, though the quality of the beverage differed—which is not unusual—according to the social level: while the common people could afford only beer or some "poor" wine, the well-to-do and the elites enjoyed very fine wines, either local or imported. Except for the work of Pierre Montet, who maintains there were *cabarets* or taverns in ancient Egypt (Montet, *Vie quotidienne*, 90, 94), I was unable to find in the secondary literature any indication as to the existence of this kind of premises. There is, however, a number of historical records that mention merry social gatherings and *symposia* which were, however, not quite the same as *cabarets* (cf. Darby, *Food*, II, 581–92). In Hellenistic Egypt, the Greeks kept taverns in their cities, but these were Greek, not Egyptian cities and the Greek ways, unlike those of Persians in Mesopotamia, never significantly affected the lives of the native population.

At the same time, I am fully aware of what Herodotus said about the ancient Egyptians customarily eating "their food out of doors in the streets;" *Herodotus*, II, 35. Unfortunately, the Greek historian did not dwell on the subject and the Egyptian documentary sources are too scarce to enable any description of the ancient Egyptians' family meals (Montet, *Vie quotidienne*, 92). We can nevertheless assume that Herodotus' words did not imply that the local population consumed their food in the markets or taverns—what the Greek historian probably meant was the fact that the Egyptians ate in the courtyards or front yards of their houses, and not inside them.

[26] Waines, "Culinary Culture of al-Andalus," 726. A short comment on the Chinese aspect of the above comparison is necessary. In his paper on Yüan and Ming periods (1271–1368 and 1368–1644 respectively), Frederick W. Mote mentions "restaurants" a number of times: first, when he apparently means the *hui-kuan* inns for travelers that were also used by the local inhabitants, particularly to cater to large dinner parties in their homes; then when he speaks of some "restaurants" specializing in particular dishes. Finally, he mentions "restaurants" while describing the great wine-halls in Nanking that were a "combination of brothels and restaurants as well as hostelries for government guests" ("Yüan and Ming," in Chang, *Food*, 194–257). In fact these three cases do not seem to sufficiently support the

Waines' assumption offers an interesting direction to look for an explanation of the absence of restaurants in medieval Cairo. The fact is that there seems to be no Arab manner, custom, or Islamic principle related to eating that would confine the Arab hospitality of the table to the private domain and, consequently, exclude it from the public one. Moreover, there are precedents recorded in Islamic legal sources that seem to question the accuracy of the distinction between the private and the public domains as we understand them.[27] True, going to a public place, full of alien persons, in order to receive one's guest and share one's food with him, simply did not make sense in the Arabic-Islamic culture.[28] This was so, however, because the Arabic-Islamic hospitality had, by the force of tradition (and out of necessity in the desert environment), to refer to the host's territory—be it a clan's camp, a house, an apartment in the caravanserai, or a shop in the local market. The notion of the "host's territory" was by no means identical with that of the "private domain."[29]

Interestingly, at the same time, there was no pattern in the Cairenes' behavior that would allow us to perceive their eating customs as a consequence of confining the hospitality of the table to the private domain

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claim that "the practice of eating together in public places such as restaurants... was well established" in China by the Middle Ages.

[27] Reports of the Prophet and some of the Companions dropping in on somebody's place without former invitation and, sometimes, even eating the absent host's food are very symptomatic; see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 9 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 21–2). What they indicate in the context in question is that the Arabic-Islamic virtue of hospitality in fact deprivatised "the private domain," as we understand it and, leaving it easily accessible to any invited or unexpected guest. Consequently, this domain became transgressable and the true privacy was limited to what was "behind the veil," or to the female enclosure of the dwelling. According to al-Ghazālī himself, "it is possible to enter a house without asking permission, it being sufficient to know that permission would be granted;" al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 9 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 22). This, by the way, seems to be a skillful way to evade the Qur'anic regulation which actually forbids to enter a house without its host's permission (see Qur'an, 24:27). For a more detailed discussion on private and public domains in the Arabic-Islamic tradition see Paulina Lewicka, "Restaurants, Inns and Taverns that Never Were. Some Reflections on Public Consumption in Medieval Cairo," *JESHO* 48/1 (2005): 51–8.

[28] A certain break in the traditional host-guest relation was to come only with the introduction of a coffeehouse by the early sixteenth century, when the act of hospitality was transferred to a public place. It was only from then on that one's territory with all its "trappings and symbols of proprietorship" was no longer required to invite a guest and share something with him. See Ralph Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), 98–100.

[29] It is enough to remember Muḥammad's lot in Medina that, beside including his wives' huts, played a role of a mosque, of the Meccan *muhājirūn* night's lodging-ground, of the reception hall, eating-house, and the community council's seat as well; no doubt private property and private territory that, however, could hardly be called private domain.

or to someone's territory. The customs of entertainment that prevailed in Cairo did not in fact exclude eating in public places. True, people, though not all of them, ate and fed their guests at home; true, all ambassadors and foreign agents were received, and often hosted, at the caliphs', sultans', and local officials' private palaces and villas. But there were also some phenomena in the domain of hospitality of the table the privacy of which appears to be somewhat relative. For example, various public food-parties were organized by the Fatimid rulers, and the festive *simāṭ*s whose victuals, after having been paraded through the streets of Cairo and al-Fusṭāṭ, were consumed by the city's inhabitants.[30] Additionally, Coptic holidays, celebrated (up to the ninth/fifteenth century) by Christians and Muslims together, saw eating and drinking in public as a customary practice. There were also Islamic "saint days" (*mawālid*) with their traditional sweets, and visiting of the graves (*ziyārāt al-qubūr*) during which one could enjoy good food.[31] Snacks were also consumed on pleasure boats on the Nile and there were garden-parties held on Rawḍa island at the Nilometer[32] and in various other gardens and orchards[33] where, as a Flemish traveler observed with bewilderment,

> the seigneurs, the notables, and the merchants pass their free time . . . They often spend ten or twelve days there without leaving the place. Some of them in the small houses, others in the tents, still others in the little pavilions. They bring with them their foods and drinks and all what is necessary. One can see a lot of women walking and visiting them, and having a lot of good time. Truly, they live here like in the paradise.[34]

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[30] For the references regarding the sugar sculptures that in the Fatimid times were paraded through the city see above, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," pp. 311–12; on public banquets and food distributions organized by Mamluk officials see Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam. Mamluk Egypt 1250–1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 50–5 and the references therein; cf. also Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's observations on the members of the Cairo elite giving banquets to the city's inhabitants; *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 49–50.

[31] Christopher S. Taylor, *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyāra and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1999), 65, 77.

[32] Where, during the days of the inundation of the Nile, people ate grilled food, sweets and fruits; see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 106.

[33] Particularly in those grown in the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries inside the triangle made up by the roads connecting Cairo, al-Fusṭāṭ, and Būlāq, where there were "many promenades . . . and beautiful little pleasure houses, and all kinds of plants, delicate and smelling, and fruits of every kind;" see van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 47.

[34] Ibid., *Voyage*, 57, 60. See also Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's description of "the strange festivities;" *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 49. On gardens of al-Qāhira in the Fatimid times see Goitein, "Cairo," 80–96.

Indeed, as far as eating and entertainment were concerned, nothing seemed to favor or stress the need of the private domain. Furthermore, there exists a premise, in the form of a certain social practice, that allows us to assert that the absence of restaurants in Cairo did not necessarily mean there was no social need for a more stable establishment where one could not only spend his free time out but eat as well. Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, an Andalusian who lived in Cairo for some years in the 40s and 60s of the seventh/thirteenth century, was shocked to notice, in the Friday mosque of al-Fusṭāṭ, practices that were apparently unknown to him from his fatherland. What he saw included the hucksters selling all kinds of sweets and nuts and the people consuming the snacks right in the mosque, apparently with no feelings of confusion (in fact the remnants of food scattered all over the courtyard and the corners of the mosque suggest that not only biscuits and nuts were eaten there).[35] One could wash the food down with water distributed in vessels by local boys, who circulated among those eating and earned their living this way. Ibn Saʿīd was equally surprised to see other local phenomena: the children playing in the mosque's courtyard, some black and red graffiti scribbled on the walls, and local people walking across the edifice, as this was their shortcut to the neighboring street.

Although al-Maghribī's account pictures the situation in only one particular mosque in al-Fusṭāṭ, we can presume that the situation in at least some of the sanctuaries of Cairo, as well as of some other parts of the Islamic world, was very much the same.[36] The food sellers (and not only them) quite early discovered that the mosque building was a perfect place for trading and that the merchandise sold very well there, particularly on Fridays. Such practices, already customary by the fifth/eleventh century, made al-Ghazālī conclude, with a common sense so typical of him, that in principle the mosque should be used neither as a thoroughfare nor as a place where utensils, foodstuffs, or books were being sold. If, however, those things caused no obstruction and took place infrequently, they were permitted.[37]

Ibn al-ʿImād al-Aqfahsī, an eighth/fourteenth-century Egyptian authority on Islamic table etiquette, presented an even more precise opinion. According to him, one is allowed to go out of the mosque if he was hungry

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[35] Quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 341; cf. also Blachère, "L'agglomération," 20.

[36] Cf. Ahsan, *Social Life*, 151–2.

[37] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Amr bi-l-Maʿrūf wa-n-Nahy ʿan al-Munkar*, in *Iḥyāʾ*, II; Engl. tansl. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 175.

and wanted to eat. The author's further explanation confirms that leaving the mosque in such a case is not obligatory and that a person can, but does not have to do it: "one can eat in the mosque as long as he does not mess up and does not eat garlic or onions or any other things that have a hateful smell; if, however, these things were cooked, they are not hateful anymore."[38] Although the post-al-Ghazālī authors of the *ḥisba* manuals recommend that the doors should be closed after every prayer to keep the mosques free of those who ate food, slept, practiced a trade, or sold goods in them,[39] the custom remained. The need for a friendly meeting-place for the local community, for an establishment where neighbors' social life could blossom, where one could make an appointment, sit with friends, talk, discuss, and have some refreshments, must have been quite strong.[40]

The mosque, however, though willingly visited, well known, and safe, was not a perfect seat for the community center, as some activities—like occupying oneself with trivial, frivolous, or base talk ("idle and Alehouse talke" as one Western traveler called it)[41]—were not the right thing to do in the place of worship. No wonder then that the success of the coffeehouse, an institution that began to revolutionize Cairo's social life from the early tenth/sixteenth century,[42] was so stunning. The advent of the coffeehouse is important here for two reasons: it is significant in the context of hospitality, and it is meaningful for an explanation of certain phenomena within gastronomic culture. With drinking coffee becoming a favorite public pastime, a coffeehouse soon replaced (or at least paralleled) a mosque as a place for neighbors to gather and a center of social life. The role it came to play in Cairo resembled, in a sense, that of the tavern

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[38] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ Manbūmat Ādāb al-Akl wa-sh-Shurb wa-ḍ-Ḍiyāfa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Ilah Nabhān and Muṣṭafā al-Ḥadrī (Hims: Al-Yamāma, 1994), 80, 103. Cf. the Prophet's widely known distaste of garlic and onion.

[39] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 110–11; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 175.

[40] Cf. Goitein's comments on the mosque as a meeting place of the community in *Daily Life*, 31–3.

[41] Hattox, *Coffee*, 100.

[42] Coffee was introduced to Cairo in the first decade of the sixteenth century in the Yemeni quarters of the al-Azhar theological complex. Soon it started to be sold in the streets immediately around the mosque, and was drunk openly, not only in the precincts of al-Azhar, but in much of the rest of Cairo. While it remained one of the props of the nocturnal devotional services of the Sufis, others, perhaps less spiritually inclined, found it a pleasant stimulus to mingle. See a detailed study by Hattox, *Coffee*, 27, 28. For the design of an early-nineteenth-century coffee shop interior in Cairo see interesting description in *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, XVIII /1/, 158–9. Also Gonzales, *Voyage*, 187. One can hardly avoid comparing the premises' arrangement to that of the rooms where the *qāṭ* chewing sessions are held in today's Yemen.

in European cities. The nature of the beverages and their effects upon humans were naturally different, but the ends for which people gathered in the two establishments remained similar. Conversation flourished in coffeehouses, with time there appeared water-pipes, gaming, entertainers and performers, and, occasionally, drugs. Men shared their thoughts and had a good time, spending hours in the premises.[43]

The introduction of coffee and coffeehouses changed people's lives in many ways. Beside providing a pretext to regularly go out for reasons other than religion or business, it also brought about a shift in the host-guest relation and the appearance of what Ralph Hattox called "substitute hospitality." From now on a host did not have to be surrounded by his possessions, by all the symbols of proprietorship that had always to be present when one welcomed his guest in his house or his shop. It is also true that the act of hospitality could now be transferred to a public place where one's position and responsibility as host was limited. The change was significant, for never before an invitation and consumption concerned a public place.[44] But, strangely enough, this change did not affect food which, generally, was not introduced to the Cairene coffeehouse.[45] Moreover, for at least four centuries no eating establishment was patterned after the coffeehouse. What makes it even stranger is that in the mosque, where people used to gather for social ends before the coffeehouse appeared, eating was habitually practiced. Thus the mosque appears to have been the only place (if we disregard the case of sweet-sellers' shops, where the tenth/sixteenth-century Egyptian cavalrymen used to sit for hours)[46] where one could buy food—even if these were only sweets and nuts—and eat it *in situ*.[47] And a question arises, why the

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[43] For discussion of coffeehouses in the Turkish context see Ekram Işin, "Coffeehouses as Places of Conversation," in Faroqhi and Neumann, *Illuminated Table*, 199–208.

[44] Hattox, *Coffee*, 98–100. To be clear, to have a cup of coffee, one did not have to go to the coffeehouse or coffee shop. Equally popular, particularly in the commercial areas, was ordering a coffee from a nearby stall and having it brought by an attendant—exactly as it was done with the dishes from the street cooks' shops; see Hattox, *Coffee*, 79–80.

[45] Although in the mid-eighteenth century the customers of the coffeehouses, who often passed whole days in the establishments, used to send to the shops for their provisions to be brought in. But in the mid-eighteenth century "coffee-houses [were] not resorted to by the best company, but only by people of the middle rank." Besides, the establishments were not places where one dropped in to have just a cup of coffee. "They [had] their music at certain hours of the day, in some of them, and in others a man [told] some history, a sort of Arabian tales, with a good grace;... and those who [had] nothing to do, [passed] whole days in them;" Pococke, *Description*, 193.

[46] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 55.

[47] Apart, of course, from the above-discussed cooks' shops for the poor.

Cairenes, while transferring their social center from the mosque to the coffeehouse, did not—unlike the Londoners[48]—turn the establishments into restaurants?

The search for an answer may start with what was already said in the context of the hospitality and the private domain—that is with the assertion that the Arab-Islamic hospitality could, traditionally, work only in the host's, or private, territory and that going to an alien place in order to share one's food with one's guest did not make sense. With this in mind, we can formulate a hypothesis that the mosque, friendly and intimate, well-known since one's childhood, was perceived—contrary to the coffeehouse that constituted somebody's property—as private territory that belonged to the whole neighborhood. Eating here was as natural as praying, learning, thinking, discussing everyday affairs, taking a rest, sleeping, or watching children play. After all, the mosque that stood on Muḥammad's lot in Medina was, beside its religious and state functions, also a scene where daily life of the community and of the Prophet himself went on and where people conducted themselves as they pleased. Eating in the mosque was, then, perceived as eating on one's own (although, in fact, community's) territory.

The rules of hospitality and territoriality, as well as the absence in Egypt of the Mesopotamian-like tradition of drinking out in commercial establishments, surely contribute to understanding why there were no eating premises in Cairo. But they still do not provide a full and satisfying explanation of this problem. There is, however, one more clue, the one that could be of crucial importance for the present analysis. It is a Prophetic tradition that clearly disallows eating in the street: "To eat in the market is ignoble," the Prophet reportedly said.[49] This *ḥadīth*, uncertain as it is,[50] was, nevertheless, apparently not unknown in Cairo: it is quoted by both Ibn al-ʿImād al-Aqfahsī and Shihāb ad-Dīn al-Ibshīhī (both the eighth/fourteenth-ninth/fifteenth centuries), the two Egyptian authors who dealt with the manners relating to eating.

[48] Norris Street Coffee House on the Haymarket had been serving "curries" since at least 1773. See Collingham, *Curry*, 130.

[49] While commenting on eating in the market, al-Ghazālī also quotes a tradition he considers contrary to the one quoted above. The tradition, transmitted on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar, reads: "At the time of the Emissary of God we used to eat while walking and drink while standing up." In a way, the two traditions are not contradictory—eating while walking does not necessarily mean eating in the market—and vice versa. See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 16 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 47).

[50] Its *isnād* was considered "*gharīb*;" see ibid., II, 16 (Engl. transl., 47).

Al-Ghazālī, who commented on the subject when in the fifth/eleventh-century Iraq, mentions two points of view regarding eating in the market: on the one hand, such behavior may be "a mark of humility and an abandonment of affectation in some people, in which case it is good;" on the other, it is "a violation of good manners in others in which case it is reprehensible."[51] Al-Aqfahsī supported the latter view and was univocal in his comments: "It is hateful to eat in the market," he says and adds: "And some said: 'it is forbidden.'" But he also quotes another opinion: "And some also said: 'If one was a witness in a legal case, then it is forbidden for him; and if one was not, than it is not forbidden. And this is because that if one gives testimony, and then eats in the market, he degrades and discredits himself. His testimony would not be accepted and the one who called him as witness would loose the evidence."[52] This means, in other words, that even if there were authorities who regarded eating in the market permissible for some, they nevertheless had no doubts as to ignominious aspects of such behavior and the dishonor it brought.

The above comment, as quoted by Al-Aqfahsī, probably reflected the more general attitude towards the practice in question, which echoed not only the Prophet's opinion but also a certain attitude shared in the environment he lived in. Remarkably, S.D. Goitein's findings—and, more precisely, his failure to find any trace of "taverns" in the Geniza documents—indicate that refraining from eating out was not exclusively the attitude of Arabs or Muslims. According to Goitein, this was not so much a result of the Fusṭāṭi Jews' consideration for the Muslim environment but, rather, of "the belief that the consumption of food in public was undignified; one enjoyed eating and drinking with friends, but not in any place accessible just to anyone."[53] Indeed, "respectable people"—be it Jews, Arabs, or Muslims—apparently "did not dine out in those days."[54] This negative attitude towards eating out, transmitted from generation to generation since antiquity, with time transformed into a firm, deeply-rooted

[51] Ibid., II, 16 (Engl. transl., 47).

[52] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 78–80; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 179. As for al-Ghazālī, he considered eating in the market a violation of good manners. He also adds: "it differs according to the customs of the country and to the circumstances of people. Therefore, he who claims that it does not conform to the rest of his actions, associates with a lack of good manners and excessive greed, and so openly censures it. He who finds that abandoning affectation conforms to all his circumstances and actions, takes it as a sign of humility;" see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 16–17 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 47–8).

[53] Goitein, *Individual*, 40.

[54] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 114.

habit. It proved firm enough to make the populations of the urban centers of the Near East—Cairo included—uninterested in commercial eating establishments.[55] Actually, it took many decades after the Bonaparte's Frenchmen had established for themselves the first eating place in Cairo[56] that the Cairene own street kitchens started to transform into eating places.[57]

The issue of hospitality may appear to be not without significance for understanding another phenomenon so characteristic to the gastronomic culture of Cairo and of medieval Islamic world in general: the absence of an inn, another food-serving establishment erroneously brought to life in the secondary literature. The inn we know, an establishment providing both lodging and food for travelers, did not exist in the medieval Islamic world. Generally, the travelers passing by the region stayed in caravanserais or

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[55] The general persistence of negative attitude towards eating in the street could be essential for complementing the answer to the question why there was no food in the coffeehouses.

[56] See al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, III, 15.

[57] It is difficult to define precisely when exactly the street kitchens started to transform into eating places. Bonaparte's scholars, who scrutinized and described early-nineteenth-century Egypt, did not report any example of this kind of premises in their monumental publication. The only allusion to eating in the street referred to the Cairenes who consumed various sweets on Ramadan nights; see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, XVIII /1/, 443.

Judging upon Lane's observations (see above, p. 355), we may presume that in the mid-nineteenth century it was still exclusively the poor who, when using the services of the street cooks, ate their food *in situ*. If we are to believe French artist Georges Montbard whose drawing titled "An Open Air Restaurant at Cairo" was published in *The Illustrated London News* in 1884, in the late nineteenth century such a low status "restaurant" was an assembly of a number of individual cooks who, sitting in a row next to their cooking pots, sold their specialties to customers. The customers, clearly as poor as the cooks themselves, consumed their food while sitting either on the palm-leaf boxes or at the *fawwāl*'s, or broad-bean cook, whose stand was the most sizable and the busiest. Many thanks to Dr. Paweł Grochowicz for turning my attention to Montbard's print.

Some 60 years later, however, the transformation was already over, though the food served in the establishment that in 1940's was located somewhere on the edge of Khān al-Khalīlī was still very cheap and of mediocre quality. The place possessed one tiny room and a number of tables in the street. It was frequented mostly by the students of al-Azhar. There were also other places in the old quarters but, contrary to the above establishment (which offered an assortment of dishes), they specialized in one dish only, just like the *harīsa*-makers' shops of medieval al-Wāsiṭ. Moreover, their shape also resembled the Iraqi premises: they consisted of "little rooms, rather dirty, tightly crammed with tables, narrow wooden staircase to climb the similar little rooms upstairs. The place [famous for its kebab] was permanently busy;" see Witold Rajkowski, *Nad Nilem bije serce Wschodu. Wrażenia i obrazki z życia w Kairze* (Jerozolima, 1947), 27, 40. Today in Cairo one can still eat his/her *kusharī* in this kind of "restaurants."

khans that were the local form of a hostel (or, to use a more contemporary term, of a motel) but that can, however, by no means be considered an equivalent to an inn—the dissimilarities between the institutions were too miscellaneous and too many.[58] One of the most important of those dissimilarities is substantial for the present study—namely that the caravanserais, contrary to the European inns, did not serve food to their guests.

A relatively easy way was offered to the Western travelers or merchants who decided to spend some time in Alexandria: they could stay—if not invited to any private residence—in one of the Venetian, Genoese, or other Western *fondachi*, whose owners might also serve food and drink to their customers.[59] In Cairo there were no comparable institutions and foreign visitors to this city had to rent private houses or apartments.[60] Their hosts were usually hospitable and either shared their meals with the travelers or provided them with food. This was the case of, for example, a Florentine ambassador to sultan Barsbāy, Felice Brancacci, who during his sojourn to Cairo in 1422 stayed at a house of one Christian of Candia. He reports of himself and the rest of the embassy negotiating with an important official, then leaving him, and "going back home to have their meals."[61] This was the case, too, of an anonymous pilgrim who visited the city between 1419 and 1425 on his way from Jerusalem, who also reports

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[58] For references regarding characteristics of *khān*, *funduq*, *wikāla*, *qayṣāriyya* etc. see above, "Introductory Essay: Medieval Cairo and its Inhabitants," pp. 21–2, n. 80.

[59] Some of the European *fondachi* in Alexandria served food and drink to their European customers. Venetians in whose *fondaco* von Harff stayed served him food and drink for a ducat a week (*Pilgrimage*, 95); cf. also a passage from von Breydenbach in Raymond, Wiet, *Marchés*, 4–5. For detailed description of the European *fondachi* (*fondigoes*) in Alexandria see: van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 113–114. Also Ashtor, *Levantine Trade*, 407, 408, 410; see also Brémond, *Voyage*, 25–6; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 167; Coppin, *Voyages*, 314. See also David Jacoby, "Les Italiens en Égypte aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles: du comptoir à la colonie?" in *Coloniser au Moyen Age*, ed. M. Balard and A. Ducellier, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1995), 76–89; 102–107. For a detailed study of the institution of *funduq*, or *fondaco*, see Olivia Remie Constable, *Housing the Stranger in the Mediterranean World: Lodging, Trade and Travel in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), *passim*. Wojciech Mruk, *Pielgrzymowanie do Ziemi Świętej w drugiej połowie XIV wieku* (Kraków: Historia Iagiellonica, 2001), 112.

[60] Although it seems that during the Fatimid epoch the Amalfis (or, more generally, "Italiens du Sud") and Pisans had their *funduqs* in Cairo; see Claude Cahen, "Les marchands etrangers au Caire sous les Fatimides et les Ayyubides," in *CIHC 1969*, 98–9. Interestingly enough, in the early seventeenth century Johann Wild maintained that in his time there was in Cairo a commercial (?) building with rooms, meant for French and Italians, called "tahta kafriyyé;" Wild, *Voyages*, 93.

[61] Dopp, "Le Caire," pt. II, 115–62. The same day they were given a gift of an enormous mutton, a cage full of pullets, eight geese, another fifty hens, two "pains de sucre," and

about having his meal at a place where he stayed for the night. This time it was a hostel of a certain Genovese merchant who treated him and his fellow pilgrims "with fruits, meats, and good wines."[62] Also Pero Tafur, who in the mid-fifteenth century stayed in Cairo as an ambassador of the King of Cyprus to the Sultan, appreciated very much the hospitality of the sultan's interpreter, by whom he was received "graciously as if he had been his son, and his children were so fond of him."[63] A Flemish traveler Joos van Ghistele, while in Cairo in 1483, stayed at the house of a Flemish merchant who resided in the city.[64]

Those, who had nobody to invite them for lunch or dinner, had to help themselves and "go out into the streets and buy what was needed for food and buy water from the Nile to drink,"[65] like Arnold von Harff did during his stay in the head dragoman's house in Cairo whose rooms "were holes like pig-sties and nothing inside but bare earth."[66] Von Harff's dislike appears somewhat surprising if one remembers Erasmus of Rotterdam's horrifying description, dating back to more or less the same time, of a room in a German inn.[67] Pero Tafur also experienced buying his food in the street, which happened when he was on the way to the sultan's residence but, contrary to von Harff, he did not complain; he even sounds like he was content that he and his companions were "able to eat and drink by the way, for men go about carrying portable stoves with ready cooked food, others sell fruit, others water."[68] Indeed, the travelers who in medieval Europe usually availed themselves of the cooking services of inns during their journeys, could not count on any generous premises of this kind in Cairo. But neither could Moslem travelers who stayed in the caravanserais for the night. The Cairo khans or caravanserais were not

four boxes of local sweets. One wonders if and how the travelers made meals of all this livestock.

62 Dopp, "Le Caire," pt. II, 118; also von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102, n. 1.

63 Tafur, *Travels*, 72.

64 Van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 16. In Damietta, the traveler lodged at the house of one of the Italian merchants who came with him from Cairo (ibid., 107). See also Harant, *Voyage*, 71.

65 Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102.

66 Ibid, 102 ("this dragoman was a Mameluke, that is a renegade Christian, born in Genoa").

67 For Erasmus's description see Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners. The Civilizing Process: Volume I* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 72.

68 Tafur, *Travels*, 73.

equipped with cooking facilities and the only way to get food was to have it brought from the nearby bazaar.[69]

Interestingly, an observation by a medieval author that "because they [i.e. Cairenes] have no inns, strangers are obliged to eat wherever they happen to be"[70] was still valid in the mid-eighteenth century, when Richard Pococke, bishop of Mearth, made a remark that in the "okelas" strangers "are accommodated with a room at a very small price, but with nothing else; so that excepting the room, there are no greater accommodations in these houses than there are in the deserts, unless from the conveniency of a market near."[71] Also for Savary, Pococke's French contemporary, feeding himself was a serious undertaking: in his *Lettres sur l'Egypte* he noted that "in this country there is no possibility to dine for money at all."[72] For some reasons, Savary somehow managed to miss, or failed to use the services of, Cairo's street kitchens. In fact most of the visitors to the Egyptian capital would not even care to understand Savary's discomfort: it was so easy to simply buy and eat something in the bazaar, as did Pero Tafur or von Bretten and his companions, and, not so gladly, von Harff. Or, while staying in the caravanserai, to pay a menial to bring warm food from the street, as did the young Baghdadi merchant who in "The Christian Broker's Tale" ate his meals at Khān Masrūr, where he stayed for some time. Contrary to Parisian inns, the food in the local streets was not necessarily bad and, unlike in the *traiteurs*' shops, one could buy meals by portions, could choose between various dishes, qualities, and prices, could take the dish out, order home delivery, or have it cooked with his own products. Considering the existence of a highly developed network of bazaar kitchens, one should not wonder why nobody in Cairo entertained the idea of

[69] Actually, one of Sheherazade's stories is somewhat misleading as far as this point is concerned. In "The Christian Broker's Tale" there are scenes where young Baghdadi merchant, who hires an apartment in the Khān Masrūr (one of the most famous caravanserais of medieval Cairo), tells how he made a roasted lamb for his lover or that he prepared a dinner for her. This creates an impression like he was cooking the food himself. However, as the apartments in Cairo khans or caravanserais were not equipped with cooking facilities, there was no way to prepare anything warm by oneself, particularly that the operation of roasting the lamb was very demanding and could be carried out only in special ovens of the *tannūr*-type that were located in the street. Not to mention that a rich mercer, as the one from Baghdad was, would rather not cook by himself at all. Both the meals he ate as well as those he sent to his lover could, like other delicacies he "prepared" (i.e. wine, sweets or dried fruits), have only been brought from the nearby bazaar.

[70] Quoted without naming the source in Wiet, *Cairo*, 95.

[71] Pococke, *Description*, 37.

[72] Savary, *Lettres sur l'Egypte*, Paris 1798, I, 106, quoted in Raymond and Wiet, *Marchés*, 18.

opening a food-serving inn. Are there, however, other reasons why the Cairene caravanserais never provided food to their guests?

As late as in the end of the nineteenth century the author of the *Smith's Bible Dictionary* could still maintain that "inns, in our sense of the term, were, and still are, unknown in the East, where hospitality is religiously practiced."[73] Indeed, the hospitality, considered a virtue by both Jews and Arabs, seems to have been an important motive behind the fact that "inns" of our stereotypes, like the one in whose stable Jesus was often imagined to be born, were sparse in ancient Palestine. The most popular way to spend a night if away from home, if it was too cold to sleep under the open sky, covered just by one's woolen coat, was to ask others for an invitation. The guest was always welcomed and could be more than sure that his host would serve him with whatever he had in his pantry.[74] Goitein's observations regarding the hospitality of the Jewish community of al-Fusṭāṭ confirm the persistence of the ancient attitude: "It was religiously motivated and was extended mainly to needy people and strangers, or to others who had a claim to help . . . where the motive of reciprocity was also present. 'Putting up the wayfarer' was among the religious merits . . . ; this was intrinsically a deed of piety for which no reward should be expected, although the reward was likely."[75]

This hospitable way towards guests only partly explains, however, why the ancient Palestinian "inn" did not offer much apart from the yard surrounded by four walls and (though not always) the roof, while in ancient Greece, where many travelers also relied on the hospitality of friends, one could use the services of the innkeepers (true that these were generally held in low repute and probably resembled, in this respect, the owners of the Roman *tabernae*).[76] It does not seem to explain satisfactorily, why this

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[73] W. Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Spire Books, 1975), entry "Inn." Moreover, in the 1960s Zette Guinaudeau-Franc could still write that "Il n'y a pas de bons hôtels, de grands restaurants en Médina de Fès. L'hospitalité de ses habitants s'étend à l'étranger, relation, parent;" Zette Guinaudeau-Franc, *Fes vu par sa cuisine* (Oudaia-Rabat: J.E. Laurent, 1958), 179.

[74] Daniel-Rops, *Życie w Palestynie*, 236. It seems, however, that it was generally considered improper for a guest to stay longer than three days. See below, chapter IV.2.A.1. "Hospitality and its limits," pp. 405–6.

[75] Goitein, *Individual*, 28–9.

[76] So that "a self-respecting traveler preferred to rely on the hospitality of friends rather than on the innkeepers;" see entry "Inn and innkeepers," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In Greece and Rome the commercial taverns and inns were regarded as disreputable. They were seen as thieves' dens and brothels and were frequented primarily by the lower classes. The Roman inns were equipped with a kitchen and restaurant that opened toward the street; they had also sleeping rooms with beds, washrooms, toilets, and often horse stables.

form of facilities for travelers never developed—unlike in Europe—in the post-classical Near East. In medieval Europe, too, hospitality was regarded as duty and was rarely denied at the monastery, castle or country house. But the growing number of pilgrims and other travelers led to the appearance of an institution of an inn, which occurred in the fourteenth century.

What is interesting, similar process was taking place in China of that time: from the mid-Ming times (ca. 1500 C.E.) onward, the increased volume of travel among some groups of Chinese society led to the emergence and expansion of a new kind of establishment to serve their needs, the *hui-kuan*, or hostelry for travelers from the same province or prefecture. The *hui-kuan* had a staff of employees from the home locality, including cooks. So that "the Su-chou merchant or statesman residing temporarily at the Su-chou *hui-kuan* in Peking... could expect to hear his Su-chou speech and to eat his fine Su-chou soup noodles and pastries for breakfast."[77] Remarkably, the story of the Su-chou man residing temporarily at the Su-chou *hui-kuan* in Peking corresponds to that of the Maghrebian, Turkish, Persian, Yemeni, and other merchants who in Cairo lodged at the caravanserais reserved exclusively for their own countrymen.[78] Contrary, however, to the *hui-kuan* customers, foreign caravanserai guests in Cairo apparently could not enjoy the indoor service of a cook preparing their favorite home specialties. For these they had to go out to the bazaar kitchens, some of whose owners were likely to be their compatriots who had migrated to Egypt.

Why did a process similar to that of the establishment of an inn in Europe or the emergence of the *hui-kuan* in China never take place in medieval Cairo, a metropolis frequented by countless travelers, merchants, pilgrims, and embassies? Why did the Cairo khans and *wikālas* never decide to serve meals (not to mention provincial specialties) to their guests and choose to remain nothing more than a lodging place for the night? There is apparently no simple key to the explanation of this phenomenon, particularly that the problem did not concern only the Egyptian capital, but the Arabic-Islamic world in general, including the desert highway khans.[79]

For meals they generally provided simple fare, such as bread, fish soup, or a small amount of meat, and, above all, wine; see Hans Conrad Peyer, "The Origins of Public Hostelries in Europe," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 289.

[77] Mote, "Yüan and Ming," 244, 245, 247.

[78] Raymond, Wiet, *Marchés*, 5, 17–18.

[79] For a good historical description of such a khan see, for example, van Ghistele's note on Khān Yūnis in Palestine, or "une belle et bonne auberge à la manière du pays;" van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 4–5.

What may prove helpful for the present investigation is to recall some features of the inn and set them against those of the caravanserai. An inn, that is a small pub or hotel providing both food and accommodation, appeared in Europe as a result of a transformation of a tavern. And the European taverns, those of antiquity[80] as well as those of the Middle Ages, were not establishments designed to satisfy the noblemen's culinary needs. A tavern, usually located by a city market place, was the favorite recreation place and natural social center for the entire neighborhood. The food constituted just one of the services offered here—the institution was more popular for its alcoholic beverages, women, hazardous games, music and dances, jugglers, and actors.[81] The same concerned the inn, an institution that, having just added the guest rooms and the shelter for the beasts to the tavern's edifice, naturally inherited all the benefits of the tavern's inventory and successfully continued its traditions.[82]

Drinking and prostitution—and maybe hazard as well—seem to be also tightly connected with the activity of the Chinese "restaurants" and "inns" of this and later periods.[83] Judging by the example of medieval Europe and China, serving food in the inns seems to have been profitable only when accompanied by entertainment, in principle of the lower grade. In other words, if the hostel owner was to earn his upkeep, simple food and accommodation offer would not suffice to attract the customers—he had to provide at least women and alcohol as well.

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[80] See, e.g., Stephen L. Dyson, *Society in Roman Italy* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1992), 175; Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 11–22; Frank Rainer Scheck, *Szlak mirry i kadzidła* (*Die Weihrauchstrasse von Arabien nach Rom—auf den spuren antiker Weltkulturen*) (Warszawa: PIW, 1998), 15.

[81] Gies, *Daily Life*, 272, 339, 341.

[82] For the reason of morality, but of their safety as well, it was suggested to the clergy, pilgrims, and pious persons to avoid staying in the inns for the night, and to choose a monastery or a hospice instead. The attractions, however, proved stronger than warnings and the inn prospered, frequented by various orders of society. It was in fact only the pilgrims and the poor travelers who generally chose to rely on the hospitality of the church. On the taverns, inns, hospices and the role they played in the medieval society see, for example, Gies, *Daily Life*, 272; Janina Gilewska-Dubis, *Życie codzienne mieszczan wrocławskich w dobie średniowiecza* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2000), 167–72; Mruk, *Pielgrzymowanie*, 85–6; Norbert Ohler, *Życie pielgrzymów w średniowieczu. Między modlitwą a przygodą* (*Pilgerleben im Mittelalter. Zwischen Andacht und Abenteuer*) (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2000), 158–69, 171–76, 200–11; Henryk Samsonowicz, *Życie miasta średniowiecznego* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2001), 35–6; Janusz Tandecki, *Struktury administracyjne i społeczne oraz formy życia w wielkich miastach Prus Krzyżackich i Królewskich w średniowieczu i na progu czasów nowożytnych* (Toruń: UMK, 2001), 171–2.

[83] Mote, "Yüan and Ming," 247; Jonathan Spence, "Ch'ing," in Chang, *Food*, 289.

It so happens, however, that these were most unwelcome in the Islamic community. Muslims were not allowed to engage in any business of this kind at all, and whoever else happened to offer such services in the domain of Islam, could not count on anybody's respect or higher position on a social scale. This of course does not mean that vice did not have access to the city of Cairo: there was drinking of wine, there were prostitutes, there was gambling,[84] and, during private parties, there were music and singers. But the population's need and the authorities' permission for this kind of pastime and professions relating to it was very much limited.

Besides, the Cairene caravanserais, contrary to features that constituted *raison d'être* of the inns, and of at least some of the *hui-kuans*, were not designed to provide popular recreation and amusement to their customers.[85] Their beginnings are tightly connected to the simple caravan halting stations that were just the slightly improved version of a desert camp. Their walls were not to provide entertainment but to secure water and a more or less safe piece of ground, where one could rest and where the loads could be taken down from the beasts' backs for the night and, sometimes, sold or exchanged for other merchandise. The character of a caravanserai was quite different than that of an inn. Moreover, the former, as an institution meant for the Muslims' welfare, safety, and business, was usually either founded by charity money, or sponsoring pious foundations and thus closely tightened to religious *waqf* institution, a fact that further made it impossible to introduce low forms of amusement onto their premises.

Enjoying sinful practices was out of the question in the caravanserai and thus the vital part of income of the European innkeepers was out of reach for the caravanserai owner. The obvious conclusion coming out of this parallel could be, then, that since the main reasons for the prosperity of the inn could not work in Cairo (legally and openly at least), the absence of a similar institution in this city is fully justified. At the same time, combining accommodation with nourishment did not seem to be a reasonable or profitable business—considering thousands of cooks' stands just around corner, the caravanserai's kitchen would have no chance to

[84] For kinds of games practiced in medieval Egypt and Islamic world in general see: Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), especially 9–66.

[85] Which is particularly significant when juxtaposed with China, a country where people traveled for pleasure since early Middle Ages and where, after the fifteenth century, tourism became "a new form of ostentatious consumption." See Mote, "Yüan and Ming," 245.

compete. In fact the only institutions of the medieval Near East that in some cases offered food to travelers, in addition to accommodation for the night, were the Islamic religious "convents" like *zāwiya*s and *khānqā*s.[86] Their hospitality, as that offered by mystics of religious institutions based on the idea of charity and pious life, should, however, be compared to that of the European monasteries rather than to that of inns. Feeding a passer-by, and particularly a pilgrim, was an act welcomed by God and rewarded with blessings. So people did it—and not only the mystics of the convents, but ordinary people, too—if they only had a chance.[87] But in both cases their acts of food-sharing or helping someone who had no provisions were voluntary. Manifestly enough, this kind of activity remains quite unlike the service of hotels' kitchens.

Europeans, while in the Near East, usually missed their inns and lamented about the situation.[88] In this context it is worth of note that the Arab traveler never complained about the lack of food-service and never expected it—be it in the desert khan or in the big city caravanserai. Was it only because he realized that if one traveled with a caravan, which was usually the case, no khan's kitchen would ever manage to serve a company that large? And that no halting station in the middle of nowhere would be able to provide much more than some walls and a well, particularly that many such establishments did not even have a guardian? It so happens that most of the social practices followed by the populations of

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[86] Cf., for example, the *zāwiya*s of Asia Minor, Iṣfahān, or aṣ-Ṣīn where Ibn Baṭṭūta was given meals: Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, II, 31, 24, 171, 175; IV, 146; see also Raymond, Wiet, *Marchés*, 14–15. One can hardly escape comparing the "food service" offered by the mystics of the *zāwiya*s to the "*rifāda*" service performed in pre-Islamic Mecca by Banū Quraysh, who as a tribe were responsible for providing the pilgrims with food and raisins bought for the money they managed to collect.

[87] Edward Lane's observations as made in the nineteenth-century Cairo confirm that the attitude of his contemporaries towards hospitality was very much the same: "when a person is paying a visit to a friend, and the hour of the dinner or supper arrives, it is incumbent for the master of the house to order the meal to be brought and the same is generally considered necessary if the visitor is a stranger." Lane, *Manners*, 148.

[88] But some did not complain. Ludolph von Suchem, who in the mid-fourteenth century traveled from the Holy Land to Egypt, noted that "In this desert there is no lack of anything needful save only water.... Good Saracen inns may be found at the end of each day's journey, and all that one needs except wine." In fact a travel account by Ludolph von Suchem seems to be the only historical source that signals existence of food services in the caravanserais of the Near East. Considering the author's questionable reliability, however, his words should not be taken too seriously (von Suchem, *Description*, 66). The fact that the tenth-century Muslim geographer, al-Iṣṭakhrī, could find forage for his animals and the food for himself in the khan located in the region of aṣ-Ṣughd, east of Bukhara, does not mean that the premises provided food to their guests; the case is quoted in Raymond, Wiet, *Marchés*, 11–13.

the Arabic-Islamic world can usually be traced to the Prophetic traditions, many of which reflect the ancient customs of the Arabs. The *ḥadīth* which may throw some light on this particular question is so well-phrased that it could in fact be hung over every caravanserai's gate. "When a guest arrives, he brings his own provisions with him," the Prophet reportedly said.[89] The Tradition, mentioned by none of the Sunni authorities, was quoted by the famous Fatimid legislator the *qāḍī* Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nuʿmān in his *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*. Of course, one should not ignore the fact that an-Nuʿmān's *Daʿāʾim*, one of the most important legal sources of the Ismāʿīlīs was, like all the philosophy of the Fatimid dynasty, of little interest to Egyptians. But it is neither for the accuracy of its *isnād* nor for the influence of the Ismāʿīlī faith on population of medieval Egypt that this tradition proves significant for the present study.

Quoted here as an indication of certain habits which were possibly practiced by the ancient Arabs, it not only indicates that every traveler was supposed to always carry his own food with him[90] and to care for having the provisions refilled if he ran short of anything, but also confirms he could neither expect nor count on finding anything more than water in the place he stopped for the night—if the well was not covered by the moving sands. The rationale behind this *ḥadīth* becomes even clearer when we consider another, this time a canonical Sunni one: "Gather together over your food and you will be blessed in it."[91] The Prophet's ordinance was obligatory for everybody, but in reference to travelers it implied more than in the case of settled persons: similarly to the *ḥadīth* quoted earlier, it

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[89] "But when he departs, he goes with the sins of his hosts (which are pardoned);" an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, II, 104 (Engl. transl. by Fyzee, *Compendium*, 129).

[90] Cf. also Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Qudāma al-Muqaddasī (d. 742/1341), *Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāḍiyyīn*, where in the chapter on traveler manners the author maintains that the traveler should take the provisions (both food and drink) along on a journey and adds: "And he [i.e. the traveler] should not say at his departure: 'I am full so I will take no provisions with me,' for it is ignorance" (Ibn Qudāma al-Muqaddasī, *Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāḍiyyīn* (Beirut, Damascus: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1394 H.), 118. Al-Ghazālī himself is more precise. His point is that by leaving for a journey without provisions the traveler may, in certain circumstances, cause his own death, which makes such a behavior sinful. "Leaving without provisions is not a problem if one travels with a caravan or between the villages that are close to each other. If, however, one goes to the desert with people who have no food with them nor drink, and if, moreover, he is not patient enough to stand hunger for a week or ten days, and is not strong enough to content himself with the grass, then leaving without provisions is a sin;" al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, VI, "Kitāb Ādāb as-Safar," 1101.

[91] *Sunan Abī Dāwud*, "Al-Aṭʿima": 3272; Ibn Mājah, "Al-Aṭʿima": 3277; *Musnad Aḥmad*, "Musnad al-Makkiyyīn": 15498.

taught, though in a different context, that a traveler should carry his food with him. The message was explicit: this is to be done not only because the provisions would make it possible for the man to survive—this was more than obvious; one had to do it because the meals were supposed to be shared with the traveling companions. What is more, if the provisions happened to run out, people were to collect money and fresh supplies were bought for the group. Collecting money in order to buy common food was not an ordinary social practice, nor was it a custom like many other ones. It involved acting according to the words of the Revelation: "Let one of you go to the city with your silver coin and see whose food is the purest and bring you provisions from him."[92] Again, this concerned both the settled population and those on the way. As for the latter, however, it was particularly recommended, because behaving in this manner allowed the traveling group to avail themselves of carrying and safekeeping common provisions. The main blessing that resulted from such behavior was to avoid a situation which in the unpredictable desert could cause a fight or even a murder: it assured that the meals were the same for everyone and that nobody would starve while the other would eat his fill.[93]

Although moving with an ancient caravan through the sea of sand seems too distant from appreciating the circumstances of the metropolitan caravanserais of medieval Cairo, it in fact was not so. From the social point of view, the changes were not so significant and the differences not so many. In the Middle Ages, as in the antiquity, nobody traveled alone and if a lonely pilgrim or merchant who wanted to cross the desert somehow happened to be there, he always had to join a group—the bigger the caravan, the safer the journey was supposed to be. For the reasons mentioned above, the groups crossing the desert land had to carry biscuits, dates, flour, or cheese with them, and this equally concerned pre-Islamic Arab nomads, Roman soldiers, Muslim merchants, and medieval Europeans who headed for the Christian sanctuaries. Though the latter were not mindful of Islamic ordinances, they, too, bought common food in the markets, since their Arab guides told them to do so.

When a caravan was reaching Cairo, its members behaved very much like their forefathers did while entering khans of ancient Mecca or Damascus. Some pitched a camp in the city suburbs and consumed the provisions they carried, to refill them when the food ran out. Some moved to

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[92] Qur'an, 18:19.
[93] Cf. Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 89.

the city caravanserais to unload the burdens. Principally, Cairo caravanserais were in some aspects not much different from other establishments of this kind: when a guest arrived, he brought his provisions with him. If his food was gone, he went to the market for the refills; if he was a lone traveler, he bought food for himself; if, however, he traveled with a group, the food was to be bought for the group. The Cairene street kitchens were an additional, if sometimes unexpected, attraction that made the traveler's life easier and more exquisite—a perspective of staying in Cairo meant enjoying a choice of meals rather than discomfort or fear about provisions.

There is no simple answer to the question of why there was no commercial eating establishment and no "real" inn in medieval Cairo. Each of these two kinds of premises was absent from the Egyptian capital for its own reasons. These reasons appear to share, however, two fundamental elements that not only allow us to bring them together within one common "foodways" framework, but also mark out Cairo's location in social history, making the behavior of its population more understandable.

The first such element is the Egyptians' immutably conservative attitude towards their own manners and customs. As Herodotus put it, the Egyptians, who were, "in most of their manners and customs, exactly reverse to common practice of mankind," were generally "averse to adopt Greek customs, or, in a word, those of any other nation."[94] Indeed, the Egyptians tended to be aloof towards the visiting or ruling foreigners, so much so that "no native of Egypt, whether man or woman, will give Greek a kiss, or use the knife of a Greek, or his [skewer], or his cauldron, or taste the flesh of an ox, known to be pure, if it has been cut with a Greek knife."[95] What the Greek historian observed in the mid-fifth century B.C.E., was valid for other times, too: the Persian occupation, the Hellenistic administration (when "the conflict of interest between native and immigrant was both economic and cultural")[96] as well as the Roman period, particularly that the Romans introduced the "veritable ancient apartheid" in the province.[97] The autochthonous Egyptians apparently remained unchanged under the Byzantines and other foreign rulers after the Muslim conquest as well, paying as little attention to them as they had paid before "to the majority

[94] *Herodotus*, II, 35, 91.
[95] *Herodotus*, II, 41.
[96] Crawford, "Food," 136–46.
[97] Ritner, "Egypt under the Roman Rule," 1–33.

of Greek and Roman officials, nobility, and intellectuals."[98] In the context of the question at hand, this attitude is important: it means not only that the Egyptians rejected anything foreign, but also that they invariably continued to live the life they knew, thus keeping the tradition of their forefathers undisturbed. If a habit was not traditionally practiced by native Egyptians, there was little chance it could be adopted from local Greeks[99] or from residents of any of the occupying empires.

The second point touches on Islam itself or, rather, on the nature of its influence upon the population of Cairo. The crucial question of absence of the public-consumption establishments from the city was at least partly explained by the Islamic law, and particularly by various instances from the Sunna of the Prophet. The religiously motivated hospitality, religiously connoted negative perception of eating in the street, or religiously reinforced traveler's code, were all of consequence. The ban on alcohol was not insignificant, either. All this allows one to conclude that the Cairenes' compliance with Islam was at least partly responsible for their disinclination to dine out. Indeed, Cairo, unlike, for instance, Alexandria, was very Islamic at its roots. While most of the country resisted Islam for ages, Cairo knew no other pattern (except for looking, from time to time, at the neighboring al-Fusṭāṭ). Its Christian quarters notwithstanding, Islam remained the city's fundamental feature throughout its history. Putting aside the case of the Fatimid dynasty, in whose times Cairo was not really an urban center, and who generally did not care much about what their subjects did, the soldier-like approach to Islam of the later rulers, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks, was more active and more widely felt. The Mamluks not only made Islam prevail in Egypt: above all, they made it blossom in Cairo.

It would not be surprising at all, then, if this Islamic constitution of the city effortlessly kept in check any local pre-Islamic practices that attempted to penetrate the city walls. And yet this was not the case. Though the Cairo Christian community was rather weak, many of the indigenous Coptic or even pagan customs and practices, non-Islamic in nature, easily found their way into the town and the life of its Muslim community: popular festivals on the Nile, visiting cemeteries, and drinking of wine and barley

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[98] Darby, *Food*, II, 587.

[99] Though this probably did not apply to the Hellenized Egyptians (or Egyptianized Greeks, descendants of mixed Graeco-Egyptian parentage) and maybe to some privileged Egyptian families.

beer are the most popular examples.[100] But the Muslim Cairenes were not open to just any innovative influences. Conforming, in a sense, with the ancient rule observed by Herodotus, the inhabitants of Cairo, though in significant part foreigners themselves, did not let foreign ways affect their lives.[101] The only non-Islamic practice acceptable was the local tradition of the native Egyptians. The reasoning presented so far entitles us, then, to trace the explanation of the absence of commercial eating establishments in Cairo to two phenomena: the Egyptians' faithfulness to their own practices and, at the same time, their indifference to pre-Islamic influences of foreign origin[102] on the one hand, and, on the other, to the Cairenes' compliance with the ordinances of the legal sources of Islam.

The fact, that the attitudes of al-Fusṭāṭ Jews to eating in the street (which they considered undignified) or to the question of hospitality were almost identical with those of the Cairo Muslims, may suggest that what shaped certain types of behavior in this locality had to emanate from one, if very distant, source. In other words, it implies that the local practices were prompted by a common ancient socio-cultural tradition the roots of which stretched far beyond the outset of the Islamic era and whose heritage made the old taboos binding for the future generations. This must have been the case with the eating (and drinking) out. The logic behind the customary practice of excluding food service from the post-classical Near Eastern caravanserai must have had similar roots. This ancient influence, however, seems to have been of limited range: valid and common for Egypt and Syro-Palestine, and for at least part of the Arabian Peninsula, it did not reach as far as Iraq and Persia. This limitation is probably responsible for certain cultural differences between the two regions. It is probably why the Jews and Christians of Iraq ran taverns, and those of al-Fusṭāṭ did not.[103] Probably this is also why in Iraq one could eat out, while in al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo he could not.

What the above observations indicate is that the Islamic rules (that is those relating to consumption in the street, hospitality, but also to traveling) introduced to the then mostly Christian Egypt were apparently not

[100] Though, as far as public drinking is concerned, the rulers of Cairo, unlike the Abbasids of Baghdad, were very effective in guarding the social mores.

[101] It is, in fact, very interesting how tens of thousands of foreigners who came to al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo from every possible direction and settled there for good, conformed to the local ways.

[102] This does not refer to material culture.

[103] Which was despite of the fact that the Jewish community of al-Fusṭāṭ included, beside the Palestinians, also the Babylonian or Iraqi Jews.

perceived here as carriers of new, alien ideas. Rather, Islamic law (in this case in the form of Arab-Bedouin customs endorsed by the new religion) just reinforced in Egypt, in al-Fusṭāṭ, and in Cairo, a set of ageless rules of social behavior that belonged there anyway. The Egyptians' faithfulness to their own customs and the Cairenes' observance of the Islamic law were responsible for the local attitude towards the public consumption and, therefore, for the absence of the consumption establishments in Cairo. But it would not work this way if not for the fact that Islam itself descended from the same ancient social and cultural tradition that Egypt was a part of. The two elements could become active factors because they reinforced each other. In other words, the Islamic tradition relating to the problems in question matched the local culture. For wherever Islamic ordinances were alien or contrary to the ancient, indigenous way—as the ban on alcohol—they were not easily welcomed. And maybe it is here that lies the key to understanding not only the Cairenes' approach to public consumption, but also the philosophy behind their other food customs.

2. The Dining-Room

With the possibility of eating while walking or standing excluded from the code of eating behavior, Cairenes, and Arabs in general, were obliged to sit at whatever table they had.[104] As there were no premises designed

[104] According to Robert Irwin, "many citizens" of medieval Cairo who "availed themselves of take-away dinners" either consumed the food "as they continued walking," or took it "back to their houses;" Irwin, *Arabian Nights*, 127. However, there is little likelihood that people indeed ate while walking. First, having in mind any possible dinner or lunch menu that, in most cases, required the use of plates or bowls, it appears rather impracticable that anyone would try to eat warm food while walking, especially that a meal rarely could go without a loaf of bread the pieces of which were dipped in the dish. In this context, the information transmitted by Jean Thenaud, who in the early sixteenth century observed that people ate while "coming and going" sounds somewhat astonishing (see Thenaud, *Voyage*, 47). Besides, there was no need for such behavior, for whoever had to eat at his shop or office during his "working hours," was brought his dish by a menial. Moreover, consuming the food while walking does not seem to have been an accepted practice in the medieval Islamic society. Both Ibn al-Ḥājj and al-Aqfahsī have no doubts that one should not eat while standing or walking, only after he sits down; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 221; al-Aqfahsī also reports that it was considered reprehensible by Anas; see al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 80–1. What is interesting, while commenting on eating in the market, al-Ghazālī quotes a tradition transmitted on the authority of Ibn ʿUmar who said "At the time of the Emissary of God we used to eat while walking and drink while standing up." Nevertheless, he considers such behavior a violation of good manners (even though the majority may see it as a mark of humility). He also adds that "it differs according to the customs of the country and to the circumstances of people" (quoted in Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*,

for public consumption in Cairo, the take-aways, bought from any of the street kitchens, had to be carried to homes, caravanserais, shops, craftsmen workshops, warehouses, etc. to be consumed there. This concerned the majority of the city's population. The wealthy ate in their palaces and villas.

A place to eat is associated first of all with the eating- or dining-room of a house or an apartment.[105] But in the medieval Cairene house, very much like in the European houses of the Middle Ages, there was no room called "dining-room," or a room called "eating-room."[106] From the moment the humans started to appreciate the hearth, the household's focus was where the fire was kept. It provided not only the heat for cooking, but also the site for eating meals and placing beds nearby.[107] However, medieval Cairo remained one of those few places to which this rule could not be applied, if only because there was no kitchen hearths in most medieval Cairene houses, and probably not even food warmers. The climate, and the architecture it affected, not only prevented people from using kitchens at home

II, 16 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 47). Eating while standing or walking was not practiced by the inhabitants of Palestine of the times of Jesus (Daniel-Rops, *Życie w Palestynie*, 188). In this context, it might be interesting to consider the fact that the ban on eating while standing (as well as the ban on eating in the open air) belongs also among older and more numerous traditional Hindu prohibitions related to eating; see Goody, *Cooking*, 124.

[105] Although the Mamluk amirs had no objections to holding food banquets in the stable; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 701.

[106] See Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture," 49, and Behrens-Abouseif, *Architecture*, 39, where the authors argue that there was no dining-room in the medieval Cairene house. According to Nelly Hanna, there was no dining-room in traditional houses or apartments of Ottoman Cairo, although we can find some exceptions in the case of big palaces; see Hanna, "Cuisine," 409.

In Europe, rooms designed for dining began to be built into the middle-class houses as late as in the seventeenth century; see Visser, *Rituals*, 147; Strong, *Feast*, 242–4. But as far as the space designated for eating is concerned, the medieval world was unlike the antiquity. In the early Roman period meals had been served in the atrium and later in a room called *cenaculum* but when the fashion for reclining came in, the special room (*triclinium*) was developed. The ancient (Near Eastern and European) way of eating while reclining required special couches, usually large and often made of stone; these, in turn, needed special rooms in which they could be set. Romans, who learned to recline from Greeks and Etruscans, were particularly demanding: in order to preserve a triclinical, three-couch ideal, imperial architects planned dining spaces that could multiply the basic unit many times over. The requirements of an average ancient Palestinian were more modest as far as his couches were concerned; he too, however, had to allot a special, "eating" room for them. See Bober, *Art*, 181; Pauline Donceel-Voûte, " 'Coenaculum'—La sale à l'étage du locus 30 à Khirbet Qumrân sur la Mer Morte," *Banquets d'Orient*, 61–84; on reclining while eating see also below, chapter IV.2.B.2. "The posture," pp. 422–4.

[107] Visser, *Rituals*, 79, 146–7.

and from eating by a fireplace, but it also made them stand back from any source of heat and gather where the air was agreeably cool.

Instead of chimneys, most of the roofs of city houses had wind-catchers. These penthouse-like constructions, called *bādhahanj*, caught the cool breeze which, via a vertical ventilation shaft, air-conditioned the rooms below.[108] And so Cairenes, unlike the European medieval lord who slept and ate by the fireplace,[109] ate and slept by the air shaft. The most privileged of the city's dwellers sometimes arranged the huge wind-catchers atop their villas so as to be able to hold banquets directly under the construction's sloping roof.[110] In the most modest apartments, on the other hand, the unsophisticated ventilation system consisted of windows and simple openings (*malqaf*) in the walls. Whatever the ventilator, the meals were served and consumed where the air-conditioning let in a cool breeze.

The standard and layout of such places varied from house to house, depending, naturally enough, on the social and material status of the houses' owners. In large and rich houses, the guests were received in the area called *qāʿa*, a reception hall, or the official, "living" part of the house.[111] *Qāʿa*, paved with marble and decorated with painted wooden ceilings, was usually located on the ground floor but sometimes also on an upper storey. It always constituted the highest structure in the house and occupied most of its elevation. The medieval Cairene *qāʿa* is relatively well documented and has been a subject of a number of studies. Nevertheless, the question of the part of the *qāʿa*, which served as what might be regarded as eating-room remains somewhat confused. The problem seems to result from unclear interpretation of two technical terms, *īwān* and *majlis*, as used in the context of Cairene medieval domestic architecture. Both of them are fundamental for defining the eating space of the Cairo house.

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[108] For the *bādhahanj* as mentioned in the Cairo Geniza documents see S.D. Goitein, "A Mansion in Fustat: A Twelfth Century Description of a Domestic Compound in the Ancient Capital of Egypt," in Miskimin, Herlihy and Udovitch, *Medieval City*, 163–78; idem, "Urban Housing," 17; for the *bādhahanj* as mentioned in the Mamluk documents, see Bylinski, "Darb Ibn al-Baba." For the mentions in the Western travelers' accounts see, for example, Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 187; Coppin, *Voyages*, 78–9. For the best technical study of the device see David A. King, "Architecture and Astronomy: The Ventilators of Cairo and their Secrets," *JAOS* 104.1 (1984): 97–133.

[109] Visser, *Rituals*, 147.

[110] This was practiced, for instance, by the Fatimid rulers; see, for example, Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 92; al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 168, 217, 239, 316.

[111] The term "*qāʿa*" is also used to designate a type of living unit that comprises such a hall together with various dependencies attached to it.

Very briefly, the term *īwān* designates (in its most popular meaning) an audience hall in the form of a single large vaulted hall walled on three sides and opened directly to the outside on the fourth. It is generally accepted that it came to Egypt only with the Ayyubids[112] and became most popular in the Mamluk era. In Cairene residential architecture of the Middle Ages, and later on, such *īwāns* were essential components of the house's reception space called *qāʿa*, an elongated hall with two slightly raised *īwāns* at either end, and a central area (called *dūrqāʿa*) either open, or with a high ceiling. Since the *īwāns* were sitting places, their floor had to be covered with rugs and carpets. Those who could afford it, used silk carpets in summer, and wool ones in the winter.[113] To get into the *īwān* from the *dūrqāʿa*, one had to climb one step. This step marked the place where one had to take off his shoes before he stepped into the *īwān*.[114] Since a number of sources stress that it was a duty of the host's servants to care for the shoes of the guests,[115] we can presume that the shoes were not simply left in front of the *īwān* but were kept somewhere on the side, possibly on some kind of shelf. Leaving sandals or shoes directly before the *īwān*'s entrance would, particularly in case of large parties, block access to the room and make it rather difficult for the host to hand the right pair of shoes to his guests upon their departure (a gesture recommended by the savoir vivre compendia).

Sometimes mezzanine loggias and galleries were incorporated in the high walls of the *qāʿa*. The loggias were made for musicians entertaining the audience below, while galleries were meant for the use of the ladies of the family who could watch the entertainment that went on downstairs from behind the wooden lattice screens called *mashrabiyya*. *Īwān* usually

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112 In fact, the *īwān* form was not unknown in Egypt of the Fatimids; however, its use was infrequent and probably limited to the palatial architecture; for detailed study of the problem see Sayed, "Development of the Cairene *Qāʿa*," 31–53.

113 Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39. Cf. Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 131–2. Actually, there was no other decoration or furniture in the *īwān*. As de Villamont puts it while describing the interior of a sixteenth-century Cairene house, "there is no table, no bench, no any other thing to sit on, only a carpet in the middle, on which they sit, drink and eat;" de Villamont, *Voyages*, 231–2.

114 On a nineteenth-century drawing reproduced in Lane, *Manners*, 154, there is no such a step and the guests' shoes are simply left on the edge of the carpet. According to Hasan Fathy, the fact that the *dūrqāʿa* was made one step lower than the *īwāns* was a relic of the situation when this part of the house was an open internal courtyard and when the difference between the floor levels was to stop rain water from seeping into the *īwāns*; see Hasan Fathy, "The *Qāʿa* of the Cairene House, its Development and Some New Usages for its Design Concepts," in *CIHC 1969*, 135–52.

115 See, for example, al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 7a; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 183.

had windows, such as stained windows in the upper part of the wall for decorative purposes and a number of bigger windows below them. These, filled with the *mashrabiyya* screens, let the light and the air in. The *īwāns* could be built so as to command a beautiful view, thus providing the banqueters with an additional attraction. But the landscape behind the window (often a canal or a pond) cost a lot, so the *īwāns* functioning as belvederes were limited to the richest houses or summer mansions of the privileged few.[116]

The two *īwāns*, facing each other and separated by the central *dūrqāʿa* area that was usually equipped with octagonal marble fountain, constituted the eating area proper. True, they were called neither "eating-" nor "dining-rooms." But the *qāʿa* was not called "living-room," either, although it was a center of the house's daily life. Since, however, it was the *īwān* where the guests were seated, and it was here that food was served and consumed, the label of "eating-"or "dining-room" is not inappropriate to designate the area.[117]

Before the Mamluk epoch, the receiving, eating, and living functions of the *īwān* were played by the *majlis*, the term which literarily means a place where one sits down, a sitting room. In the context under consideration, it designates a place where the guests sat down and the food was served. The *majlis*, unlike the three-wall vaulted hall of *īwān*, had the fourth wall which screened it off from the *dūrqāʿa*, or the courtyard. The communication was through the folding door. In the pre-Mamluk residences, the *qāʿa* consisted of two *majlises* which faced each other across a courtyard.[118] With time, when *īwān* was becoming more and more popular, the architectural layout of the *qāʿa* apparently transformed: sometimes,

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[116] Bylinski, "Dar Ibn al-Baba," 214, where such an *īwān* is described as part of a *qitūn*, a belvedere typical for the waterfront architecture. The landscape around another type of medieval Cairo belvedere, *manẓara*, must have also been admired through the *īwān* windows; cf. Donceel-Voûte's comments on the ancient Palestinian eating-rooms "with the view" ("'Coenaculum'," 77).

[117] Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture," 47–59; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39. Interestingly, this medieval Cairene "dining-room" was, in a way, comparable to the post-second-century Roman dining-rooms the shape of which differed from typical *triclinium* of the earlier epochs. When late in the second and early third century C.E. one large semicircular couch replaced three rectangular ones in the Roman dining-room, the *triclinium* itself also changed shape, becoming a room with up to three alcoves, each containing a couch facing the unoccupied floor space in the middle; see Strong, *Feast*, 28–9.

[118] For description of the Fusṭāṭi *qāʿa*s see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 63–70; for *qāʿa* as mentioned in Geniza documents see idem, "Mansion in Fustat," and idem, "Urban Housing;" for *qāʿa* as mentioned in Mamluk documents see Bylinski, "Dar Ibn al-Baba," *passim*.

instead of the two *majlises* or two *īwāns* separated by the central area, there was an *īwān* built opposite a *majlis*.[119]

The Cairenes who could not afford residences with a *qāʿa* either owned more modest houses or flats or rented living units in the apartment buildings (*rabʿ*). These kinds of dwellings, modest as they were,[120] had also more modest main rooms. All the obvious differences notwithstanding, these rooms followed the principles similar to the reception hall of the *qāʿa* kind. Located either on the ground or on the upper floors, they consisted of the *dūrqāʿa* and, usually, of one *īwān* (rather than two, as in the *qāʿa*).[121] As in the *qāʿa*, the *īwān* was a step higher than the rest of the floor/unit level. In these type of apartments, also as in the *qāʿa*, the appearance of *īwān* was preceded by the existence of the *majlis*.

[119] The evolution of the two forms is best discussed in Sayed's "Development of the Cairene *Qāʿa*," *passim*; see also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 63–70. For some details on the *majlis*, *īwān* and *qāʿa* in architecture of medieval Cairo see also appropriate entries in M.M. Amin, Laila A. Ibrahim, *Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents* (Cairo: AUCP, 1990); J.-C. Garcin et al., *Palais et maisons du Caire*, I, *Époque mamelouke*, Paris 1982, *passim*, and Fathy, "The *Qāʿa*," *passim*. For the description of a nineteenth-century *qāʿa* see Lane, *Manners*, 26–9.

[120] Those could be, for instance, living units of the *riwāq*- or *ṭabaqa*-type; for brief description see Ibrahim, "Middle-Class Living Units," 24–30, also idem, "Residential Architecture."

[121] Though the general rule was that the *qāʿa* had two *īwāns* while units such as *riwāq* or *ṭabaqa* had one, there were exceptions, at least in the Mamluk epoch: apparently, also *riwāq*-type apartment, if owned by a member of the financial elite, could sometimes comprise two of the *īwāns*; see Bylinski "Dar Ibn al-Baba," 210, 211, 214, 216.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHARING THE TABLE

1. Note on the Arabic-Islamic Medieval Texts Related to the Etiquette of Eating[1]

According to Margaret Visser, manners, and especially the "manner", or "air", which includes speech, bearing and gesture, must be learned at the mother's knee. "Not knowing how to behave, you are never in the company of those who do know, and therefore you will never have a chance to learn the only way it is possible to learn, by their example."[2] The rule, possibly true for societies which exclude inter-class mobility, is not really valid where social advancement is possible through education and where education contributes to the shaping of the cultural background of personality. This was the case of the Arabic-Islamic world of the Middle Ages. Here manners, including table manners, were dependent on breeding and, to a certain degree, also on social status.[3] In the Arabic-Islamic world, however, one could also learn manners outside the family milieu. In the Arabic-Islamic world, the standards of conduct, being a part of Islamic cultural repertoire, could be learned from religious scholars and preachers who propagated the correct ways wherever they lived and worked.[4] In practical terms, this meant that the education in manners of the table was available not only to a student attending theological courses in one

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[1] An earlier version of this section was published as Paulina B. Lewicka, "When a Shared Meal is Formalized: Observations on Arabic 'Table Manners' Manuals of the Middle Ages," in *Authority, Privacy and Public order in Islam. Proceedings of the 22nd Congress of L'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, Cracow, Poland 2004*, ed. Barbara Michalak-Pikulska and Andrzej Pikulski (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2006), 423–434.

[2] Visser, *Rituals*, 71, 72.

[3] According to Geert van Gelder, there is no straightforward correlation between good manners and social status or wealth; van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 87, n. 19.

[4] Cf. Amalia Levanoni who, while discussing the manners of the Mamluks, states that "religious scholars brought their cultural repertoire with them; hence, the courtly code of conduct was based on Muslim tradition.... when the Mamluks rose to power, courtly models of conduct had already been a standard of Muslim culture for some time. Therefore, the Mamluk ruling elite were not free to act as they wished; Muslim standards of conduct and models of leadership dictated their behavior;" Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 203.

of Cairene madrasas, but also to a mamluk slave quartered and trained in the Citadel barracks, as well as to a fellah who, having moved to city in search for a better life, attended a local community mosque. For those who could read, there was a wide choice of table manners manuals which explicitly defined proper and improper ways of behaving.

The Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating are spread throughout volumes that belong to various genres. Written at various times between the fourth/tenth and tenth/sixteenth centuries by authors of different ethnic, social, and professional proveniences, they are too numerous and too diversified to be discussed comprehensively in the present study. This chapter is limited to a short presentation of works which are of significance for understanding and defining presumed eating behavior of medieval Cairenes.

Generally, the Arabic-Islamic compendia of table[5] manners (*ādāb al-māʾida, ādāb al-akl*) are of two categories: those written by authors of theological background, and secular texts, composed by men motivated by their literary passion and civility rather than Islamic education. Thus, not all Arabic-language texts were strictly Islamic. The religious category includes, above all, *Kitāb Ādāb al-Akl* ("Book of Manners Related to Eating") by Abū al-Ḥamīd al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111),[6] a paragon of reason and a balanced approach. The influence of al-Ghazālī upon Arabic-Islamic table manners literature was immense—his work on food etiquette was studied and quoted by most of the later authors. Another religiously motivated text was written by Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336–7), a Maghrebian orthodox Malikite scholar living in Cairo. His "Ādāb al-Akl" ("Manners Related to Eating") forms a part of a four-volume treatise explaining the proper Islamic conduct and denouncing non-Islamic innovations.[7] Like the rest of Ibn al-Ḥājj's literary output, it reflects the author's anger at a sinful society which did not follow his perception of proper Islamic behavior.

Then there is also *Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāḍiyyīn* by imam Ibn Qudāma al-Muqaddasī (d. 742/1341) where *ādāb al-akl*, table manners, are covered in a very short chapter (the work itself is an abridgement of al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm ad-Dīn*).[8] The most detailed of the compendia dealing with

[5] For the discussion of table in the context of the Arabic-Islamic culture of the Middle Ages see below, chapter II.2.A.4. "The object called 'table'."

[6] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm ad-Dīn*, Cairo n.d., II, 2–19 (Engl. translation in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī, passim*.

[7] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216–37.

[8] Ibn Qudāma al-Muqaddasī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 65–79.

the etiquette of eating is *Sharḥ Manbūmat Ādāb al-Akl wa-sh-Shurb wa-ḍ-ḍiyāfa* ("Commentary to the Regulations Concerning Eating, Drinking, and Hospitality") by Ibn al-ʿImād al-Aqfahsī (750–808/1349–1406), an Egyptian theologian of Shāfiʿi school.[9] *Sharḥ*, one of the few books devoted entirely to the etiquette of eating, was apparently meant to be a solid, reliable compendium devoid of any scholarly, preaching or intellectual pretensions. And, finally, there is *Daʿāʾim al-Islām*, a pioneer work on Ismāʿīlī law designed for reading by the initiated circle of the Fatimid elites. Its author, the famous Fatimid legislator, the *qāḍī* Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nuʿmān (d. 363/974) devoted some pages of it to *ādāb al-akl*—as seen from the Ismāʿīlī perspective.[10]

One of the oldest of the Arabic secular texts on table manners known to us is included in Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh* ("Book of Cooked Food"). Compiled, most probably, in the second half of the fourth/tenth century, the book ends with chapters on washing hands, using toothpicks, and the etiquette of eating and drinking at the table of noblemen.[11] True, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*'s chapters were written for *nudamāʾ*, the Abbasid-era kings' drinking and eating companions whose function was to entertain the rulers and other prominent persons in their pastime and recreation. Obviously enough, the lifestyles of al-Warrāq's *nudamāʾ* did not have much in common with the ways of ordinary Muslims. Nevertheless, al-Warrāq's instructions for courtiers are in many aspects comparable to those written for the Islamic urban upper classes—exceptionally strong influences of the Persian etiquette upon al-Warrāq notwithstanding.[12]

From much later times comes an interesting chapter "On Food and the Manners Relating to It, and on Hospitality and the Manners of the Host, and on the Eaters and What Was Reported about Them, etc." that an Egyptian writer Shihāb ad-Dīn al-Ibshīhī (ca. 790–850/ca. 1387–1446)[13] included in his famous anthology of Arabic literature titled *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann: Mustaẓraf*.[14] Although the author names many sources which

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9 Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*.

10 An-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, II, 102–6 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 129–30).

11 Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, chapters 127–31, 332–43 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 491–517); see also Kaj Öhrnberg, "Ibn Sattār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb al-Wuṣla ilà al-Ḥabīb / Kitāb al-Ṭabbākh, Another MS of Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's Kitāb al-Ṭabīkh*, in Marín and Waines, *Alimentación*, 23–35.

12 For more on the Persian courtly influences on the manners of the Arab *nudamāʾ*, or kings' and princes' banqueting companions, see *EI*², VII, "Nadīm" by J. Sadan.

13 For biographical data see *EI*², III, "Al-Ibshīhī" by J.-C. Vadet.

14 "Fī aṭ-ṭaʿām wa-ādābihi wa-ādāb al-muḍīf, wa-akhbār al-akl wa-mā jāʾa ʿanhum wa-ghayr dhalika," in al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 176–87.

he used to compose his chapter, he fails to name the one on which he relied most heavily, that is a food etiquette manual written by Yaḥyā Ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Jazzār (d. 669/1270 or 679/1281). This work, seven copies of which are preserved in various European libraries,[15] is titled *Fawāʾid al-Mawāʾid*, or "Morals of the Tables."[16] Al-Jazzār was by no means an average man, if only for the uncommon marriage of his two professions. Butcher among the poets, poet among the butchers, and moreover, an outstanding poet: his poems were remarkable enough to be recited by street storytellers and to be quoted, together with the biographical data referring to him, by chroniclers and historians.[17] As a poet of the elites and a renowned panegyrist, he must have been frequently invited to various social gatherings, and, quite probably, himself invited guests to his place, too. He saw a lot and he was an attentive witness. Al-Jazzār's manual, possibly a result of his day-to-day observations, seems to have been much sought-after by Cairene party-goers. The owner of the copy, which is today preserved in the British Museum, apparently lent it frequently and considered it precious; to secure himself against losing the book, he wrote on its cover: "Whoever borrows this book of mine and does not return it to me is a bastard and a cuckold."[18] The book differed in style from manuals written by Abbasid court authors and religious scholars—it was more down-to-earth and more user-friendly. Those who were lucky enough to borrow or buy a copy, could indeed learn a lot about manners and find out how to avoid the accusation of being unmannered (*qalīl al-adab, sūʾ al-adab*) or, to use medieval European phraseology, of "peasant-like behavior."[19]

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[15] All seven are described by Renato Traini in "Un trattatello di galateo ed etica conviviale: le Fawāʾid al-mawāʾid di Ibn al-Ǧazzār," in *Studi in onore di Francesco Gabrieli nel suo ottantesimo compleano*, II, ed. Renato Traini (Roma: Università di Roma, 1984), 783–806. In the present study the British Library Ms Or 6388A of al-Jazzār's *Fawāʾid* was used.

[16] Van Gelder translates the title as "Useful Information on Meals;" see van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 88.

[17] Cf., for example, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VII, 347, 369; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya wa-n-Nihāya fī-t-Tārīkh*, Beirut 1987, XIII, 310; Kātib Čelebi (Ḥājjī Khalīfa; the eleventh/seventeenth century), *Kashf aẓ-Ẓunūn* (Beirut, 1992; Maktabat at-Tārīkh CD edition), II, 1302; Ibn al-ʿImād, ʿAbd al-Ḥayy (the eleventh/seventeenth century), *Shadharāt adh-Dhahab* (Beirut, n.d.; Maktabat at-Tārīkh CD edition), III, 364.

[18] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 1a.

[19] Apart from the above-quoted titles, there is also a number of works which deserve mentioning and which have been—though to a lesser degree—taken into consideration in the present study. Thus there is the oldest and famous manual, *Al-Muwashshā aw aẓ-Ẓarf wa-ẓ-Ẓurafāʾ* by Abū Ṭayyib al-Washshā (ca. 246–325/ca. 860–936), which, however, is most suitable for studying courtly manners in the early Abbasid caliphate. One should also mention chapters on table manners included in *Al-Īthīqūn. Falsafat al-Ādāb al-Khulqiyya*, work on the philosophy of correct manners written by Bar Hebraeus (the

When in the late 1930's Ḥabīb Zayyāt decided to quote, in *Al-Machriq* journal, some Arabic source texts concerning the etiquette of eating, he did not have too much material to choose from. Some of the works were yet undiscovered, some remained unedited.[20] Since Zayyāt's times, a significant number of Arabic table manners compendia have been published. Surprisingly enough, neither the manuals, nor the manners themselves attracted as much attention as Arabic cookery books and the food they describe. Only few contemporary scholars made an attempt to discuss the texts. The works of three of them deserve particular attention. First, there is an exhaustive analysis of al-Ghazālī's *Kitāb Ādāb al-Akl* written in the 1960s by Hans Kindermann.[21] Another work is a concise literary study and partial translation of al-Jazzār's *Fawāʾid al-Mawāʾid* by Renato Traini.[22] Finally, there is Geert van Gelder's article on Arab literature and lexicography relating to etiquette of eating.[23] His excellent observations will be referred to below.

The question of the Arab *savoir-vivre à table* was also dealt with by Adam Mez, who devoted two pages of *The Renaissance of Islam* to courtly etiquette of the fourth/tenth-century Baghdad[24] and by M.M. Ahsan, who produced a whole chapter on the table manners of the Abbasid epoch.

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seventh/thirteenth century), the Catholicos of the East (for discussion on Bar Hebraeus' recommendations relating to eating see Michael Abdalla, "Wskazówki kulinarne Bar Ebraji, syryjskiego katolikosa z XIII w.," *PO* 3–4 /1990/: 220–5). A short chapter on table manners is also included in al-Ghuzūlī's *Maṭāliʿ*, 165–8. Al-Ghuzūlī (d. 815/1412) was a Syrian of Turkish Mamluk origin who visited Egypt a number of times. There are two post-medieval works composed by Syrian religious scholars: one by Muḥammad Ibn ʿAlī aṣ-Ṣāliḥī Ibn Ṭulūn (d. 984/1577), a teacher of traditions and jurisprudence and a renowned chronicler, titled *Dalālat ash-Shakl ʿalā Kammiyat al-Akl*, ed. M. Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1998) and the other by a Shāfiʿi *faqīh* Badr ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, titled *Ādāb al-Muʾākala*, ed. ʿUmar Mūsā Bāsha (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987). Finally, one should mention the unpublished *Kitāb ʿĀdāb al-Akl wa-sh-Shurb wa-l-Malbas* written by a Cairene author, ʿAbd ar-Raʾūf al-Munāwī, a religious scholar and a Sufi (the tenth-eleventh/sixteenth-seventeenth centuries). For comments on the Sufi approach to table manners see G.S. Reynolds, "The Sufi Approach to Food: A Case Study of Ādāb," *MW* 90 (2000): 198–217.

[20] Ḥabīb Zayyāt, "ʿĀdāb al-Māʾida fī-l-Islām," *Al-Machriq* 37 (1939): 162–76.

[21] Hans Kindermann *Über die gutten Sitten beim Essen und Trinken, das ist das 11. Buch von al-Ghazzali's Hauptwerk* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964).

[22] Traini, "Tratatello," *passim*.

[23] Van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 85–93; see also *EI*², X, "Ṭaʿām" by idem. The Arabic "table manners" literature is also discussed by Ahsan, *Social Life*, 157–64; and by Sulayma Maḥjūb, "Tārīkh al-aṭʿima ʿind al-ʿArab," in *Wuṣla*, ed. Maḥjūb and al-Khaṭīb, 58–87; Maḥjūb's lengthy study on history of the Arab table practices and manners was accurately commented by van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 91.

[24] Mez, *Renesans islamu*, 370–2.

Mez's descriptions of parties held by high court officials are not of relevance for the present study. Because of the methodology and sources he used, the chapter written by Ahsan is, however, significant and needs a commentary. Two points deserve particular attention. First of all, when aiming at the reconstruction of the Abbasids' mensal customs, Ahsan simply describes the ways presented in the Arabic-Islamic manuals of table manners, without considering the fact that these works are examples of prescriptive literature and not records of how people actually acted. Secondly, the sources provided by authors of various provenience and background are treated in Ahsan's study on equal footing, as if they were equally valuable for discussing the manners of all the Abbasid world and of the rest of the Arabic-Islamic world as well. In effect, one gets the impression that the courtly ways recommended for a king's table companion were compatible with how ordinary members of the society behaved at home. Moreover, one may mistakenly conclude that practices of certain individuals living in Abbasid Baghdad were universally valid for medieval inhabitants of all Arabic-Islamic cities and towns.

Ahsan's approach becomes particularly worthy of note when we compare it with our perception of the European savoir-vivre compendia from the same period. Interestingly, such comparison seems to show that we tend to read the Arabic-Islamic and European manuals in different and, to a degree, contradictory ways. When we consider a French or German ordinance which reads, for instance, "do not spit under the table" or "do not pick your teeth with the knife," we sometimes assume that many people actually acted in the disapproved way. When, however, an Arab author recommends: "one should wash his hands before the meal" or "one should not stare at others while eating," we are likely to understand that everybody actually acted accordingly.

Such a different perception of the Arabic-Islamic and the European manuals may be linked to the fact that their character is fundamentally different: while the majority of the former are inspired by religious tradition, the latter are mostly secular. From the thirteenth century on, most of the Western texts related to etiquette originated in the chivalrous and courtly circles. But even if some of the earlier works were written down by the Latin-speaking clergy, they still constituted a record of the prevailing social standard rather than a set of religiously-inspired ordinances.[25]

[25] Cf. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 60. The set of certain norms of behavior known as "*civilité*" gained a Christian religious basis in the eighteenth century. Apparently, it was only then

The substance of Arabic-Islamic table manners manuals, on the other hand (often densely interwoven with the food-related quotations from the Sunna of the Prophet and the Qurʾan), was never free of the religious context. Naturally enough, the style of religiously educated authors varied from secular ones at this point. But even though the latter were more fond of using secular anecdotes rather than religiously-marked stories to illustrate their narratives, they, too, quoted Qurʾanic verses and Prophetic traditions, and mentioned Islamic heroes.[26] But whatever kind of anecdotes or stories the authors used to strengthen the ordinances they discussed, these were only anecdotes and stories. In other words, the Arab authors—probably with the exception of al-Jazzār, whose presentation appears, in part at least, to have resulted from his daily observations—preferred to base their works on "merely passing on tradition" instead of observing things directly and recording personal experience.[27]

As it is easy to forget that the manuals are not much more than compilations of instructions of how a Muslim (or, in other cases, an Islamic ruler's table companion) should eat properly, our reading of the Arabic-Islamic table manners manuals often leads to mistaking these instructions for true records of everyday practices. The effect of such a misguided approach is that misleading assertions abound. True, in many instances the behavior corresponded to the regulations, many of which simply confirmed the customary local forms. But this was not always the case. Arabic manuals, particularly those written by religious scholars, were handbooks promoting certain new knowledge and some particular ways of behavior. As such, they must have often reflected the unattainable ideal and wishful thinking of the authors rather than a picture of reality.

This was the case for a number of reasons. First, because ordinary human boorishness, impoliteness, and lack of or resistance to education impeded the introduction of the correct forms. Second, because the reality was not always as Islamic as it was supposed to be—too often an old local tradition or popular common sense proved stronger than strict and

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that the Church came to play a role of a propagator of forms of behavior among lower strata of the society; see Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 101–2. For discussion of table manners in medieval Europe see also, for example, Thomasin von Zerklaere, *Der Welsche Gast. Ausgewaelt, eingeleitet, uebersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Eva Willms* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004); Gies, *Daily Life*, 245–6.

[26] True, al-Jazzār's *Fawāʾid* includes not more than four Qurʾanic quotations and not more than three of Muḥammad's sayings, but al-Ibshīhī relies heavily on quotations from religious sources.

[27] Cf. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 70.

sophisticated rules recommended by the new religion.[28] Furthermore, the promoted ideal itself was not altogether obvious—the truths preached in the compendia did not appear to be coherent at all. In some cases, the instructions might have even been contradictory. While, for example, one theologian assured us that there was nothing abhorrent about eating at the table (object invented, after all, to make the life easier), another argued that using the table was a forbidden thing—for the Prophet used to eat on the ground.[29] While one manual allowed drinking while standing, the other defined such behavior as intolerable.[30] While one of the authors denounced conversation at the table giving the behavior of Persian and foreign kings (*mulūk al-aʿājim wa-l-Furs*) as an example to follow,[31] others recommended not to remain silent over the food exactly for the same reason: "eating in silence was the custom of the Persians/foreigners [*al-ʿajam*]," and their practices should never be imitated.[32] But this should not be surprising: the authors were coming from various social, political, ethnic, and geographical environments, belonged to various epochs and various schools of Islamic law, and the philosophies behind their writings were different, too.

Juxtaposing the European and the Arabic-Islamic cultures, as represented by the genres under discussion, cannot be of much help in reconstructing the actual table manners of medieval Near Eastern city dwellers. But it

[28] Although in the domain of table manners, in which Islam was often identical with the pre-Islamic forms, the non-Islamic innovations were not as obviously at odds with the new religion as, for instance, in the case of grave visiting or of celebration of ancient, pre-Islamic feasts.

[29] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 3 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 4–5); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 226.

[30] See, for example, al-Aqfahshī, *Sharḥ*, 80; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230.

[31] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 336 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 508); see also al-Washshā, *Muwashshā*, 193.

[32] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 6 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 13); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 223; al-Aqfahshī, *Sharḥ*, 64. Literarily, the Arabic term *ʿajam* means people qualified by a confused and obscure way of speaking. Therefore, *ʿajam* to the Arabs are the non-Arabs, or barbarians who speak no Arabic. In the Middle Ages such barbarians for the Arabs were primarily their neighbors the Persians. Although the affective value attributed to the word depended on the point of view of the user, the term *ʿajamī* most often referred to the race and culture of the Persians, and with time became synonymous with *Furs* (Persians); see *EI*[2], I, "ʿAdjam" by F. Gabrieli. For a more detailed discussion of the question see Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 24–7. Actually, al-Warrāq is the only one of the discussed authors who explicitly presents the Persian (and foreign) ways as an example to follow; in majority of the remaining manuals (which is particularly visible in Ibn al-Ḥājj's *Madkhal*) the *ʿajam* (Persians/foreigners) were mentioned only in the negative context.

may constitute a convenient point of reference that would allow one to make a number of further observations regarding the spirit that governed their table behavior.

The religious aspect of the Arabic-Islamic etiquette manuals forms the main and most obvious feature which differentiates them from similar works written in Europe. But Islam is not the only distinguishing mark of these compendia. Even more characteristic is a very subtle philosophy of host-guest relations that makes up the spirit of the Arabic-Islamic savoir-vivre. What was expected from the host and how the guest was supposed to behave were the questions that made the essential thread of most of the Arabic-Islamic manuals' construction, whereas this problem was never handled in a similar way by medieval European authors. It is one of the most distinctive signs that the two systems of table manners were shaped by different priorities.

Having analyzed current and historical "rituals of dinner" in the Western and non-Western cultures, Margaret Visser, an authority on table manners and social aspects of eating, came to an interesting conclusion. According to her, "eating is aggressive by nature" and table manners are "designed to reduce tension and protect people from one another," "because violence could so easily erupt at dinner."[33] Whatever the value of this argument for the Western culture (or any other developed or prosperous culture), it probably should not be uncritically applied to the Arabic-Islamic culture. Nor, in fact, to the Arabian pre-Islamic culture to which most of the later Arabic-Islamic table regulations can be traced. If table manners, in their Western variation, indeed came into existence as means for controlling human violence, there are arguments to prove that the origins of Near Eastern table manners were not exactly the same.

True, some of the Near Eastern regulations may appear to prove the validity of Visser's thesis for that part of the world (as, for instance "do not stare at the co-eater in a persistent manner," "do not throw kernels or peels behind for it might result in hitting your companion's head," or "do not take excessively big mouthfuls").[34] This, however, is somewhat misleading. The extreme conditions of the pre-Islamic Arab life constantly generated tensions and violence. If people starved for days in the middle of the desert and the tension grew high, violence could erupt anyway,

[33] Visser, *Rituals*, xii, 92. Cf. also Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 102.
[34] Cf. Sirach, 31:13: "No creature was greedier than the eye;" or 31:15: "Toward what he eyes, do not put out a hand; nor reach when he does for the same dish."

table manners notwithstanding. At the same time, these conditions called for positive and encouraging attitude towards the co-eater. True, the Bedouin Arab might have slurped his broth and torn at his meat with his teeth, a manner that met with scorn of his neighboring sedentary contemporaries.[35] But at the same time he shared his bowl according to the rules of hospitality and generosity, for the Near Eastern philosophy behind eating together was to give and not to hide food from the guest.[36] Food sharing, an activity that "made us human," was prompted by different factors in different cultures.[37] In the case of the Arab environment, such an approach had a simple but strong motivation, namely, public opinion: concern with how one appeared to others counted above all other considerations. Reputation was not only a value in itself. It also set the rules of reciprocity and made it possible to expect from others what one knew he deserved. "Once," as a medieval Cairene author wrote in his table manners manual,

> a noble man told his son: "listen my son, you can have a house, a servant and a slave-girl in every country." The son asked: "And how is that?" "You maintain friendship with men from every country and then, when they visit you, you treat them hospitably. And when they go back to their people, they tell them about your favors and nice behavior towards them, so that finally there is no one left among their kinsmen who would not look forward to your visit at their place."[38]

This *adab* anecdote is not only a perfect illustration of the claim that "in traditional societies, there is no explicit calculation of cost or notion of payment, but there is a recognition of reciprocal obligation."[39] It also

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[35] See, for example, a record of the Arab-Coptic encounters in 20/641 as reported by aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, IV, 110 (briefly discussed above, pt. I, chapter I.1.B. "Extra-Egyptian influences," p. 69).

[36] The minor modifications notwithstanding (these modifications were aimed, above all, at ostentatious affectation and unreasonable generosity), the new religion validated the hospitable way. For more comments on hospitality see above, chapter III.1. "Public consumption," pp. 358–64; and below, IV.2.A.1. "Hospitality and its limits," pp. 397, 404–8.

[37] Cf. Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 155; James G. Enloe, "Food Sharing Past and Present: Archeological Evidence for Economic and Social Interactions," *Before Farming* (2003/1 /1/): 1–2.

[38] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 4b. Which is nothing else than ancient "winning praise for one's hospitality" (Sirach, 32:1,2) .

[39] Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 101. In reference to food, this obligation was not limited to reciprocal visits only; most probably, it also referred to a neighborly exchange of food. Ibn al-Ḥājj points out that when someone is given food by his relative or by a neighbor, the vessel in which the food was brought cannot be returned empty—when given back, it should contain food, too; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 236–7. Cf. also the concept

demonstrates that in a society such as that of the pre-Islamic Arabs, in which the public opinion was *the* sanction, there was no need to oblige anybody to show his non-aggression by imposing special table regulations on him. It also demonstrates that in a society in which the rule of reciprocity was the guardian of the social order, it was this very rule that guaranteed a safe meal: a guest was not only expected to become in turn a host, but could also be sure that his possible aggression would be repaid in kind by the victim's cousins.[40] Moreover, unlike in many other societies which pressure guests to become in turn hosts, in the desert environment of the Arabs, hosting a guest, even if he was an enemy, was almost a biological imperative. In urban centers like Cairo, where one's life did not depend as much on the assistance of others, hospitality became nothing more than a carefully cultured phenomenon. Sincere and natural, it often was a distant echo of Abraham's pious example.[41] However, one could also practice it out of vanity or in a desperate attempt to uphold his reputation, just in order to hear people say: "What a hospitable person."[42]

In reality, things were not so simple—the Arabic-Islamic art of paying a visit or receiving a guest was not constructed upon the tricks of hospitality and reciprocity alone. The essence of this art was the philosophy of food sharing—or, more precisely—bowl sharing. Sharing a table and eating together in general distinguished civilized man from beasts

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of reciprocal altruism which, in evolutionary biology, is a form of altruism in which one organism provides a benefit to another in the expectation of future reciprocation. It is not at all necessary that the altruist expects anything in return; it is only important that altruists do generally benefit in the long run from reciprocal acts of kindness.

[40] Of course, this does not mean that the food banquet could not turn into a crime scene. The common table was not always a sacred asylum, if only because the possibility to trap the mortal enemy by inviting him to a dinner was too tempting. Cf., for example, the case of the members of the Umayyad family who, insidiously invited to a party by their Abbasid successors, were slaughtered during the event; or the Mamluks' assault on, and subsequent assassination of, Tūrānshāh in 648/1250; or a Mamluk banquet of 709/1310 which was used by sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad as an occasion to arrest the opposition amirs.

[41] See Genesis, 18:1–16.

[42] Cf. the remarks on meals sponsored by Cairo grandees as made by Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, the sarcastic Turkish official; *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 49. However, it seems that in the more artless Bedouin system of values, hospitality and feeding the guest were not exclusively a matter of reputation and publicity. If we are to believe a certain anecdote recorded by medieval Arab compilers, the self-respect and personal sense of dignity counted too. The anecdote reads, "Once, a guest called on a Bedouin. The latter let the guest into his dwelling and offered him food. The guest said: 'Actually, I'm not hungry, what I need is just a place where I can stay for the night.' 'If such is your decision'—replied the Bedouin—'then be the guest of somebody else, for I don't want you to praise me among people and insult me in private.' " See al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 3b; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 184–5.

and barbarians (which were regarded alike in the Graeco-Roman value system). Eating did not simply satisfy a bodily urge but transformed the act into a social and communal event. Eating together was a sign of communion, identity, and of belonging to the same group.[43] As such, it called for recognition and approval. Sharing a common bowl requires—much more than sharing a table—a significant degree of mutual acceptance; it is a highly intimate experience, in which sensitivity and consideration for others play an important part. What is interesting, while in medieval Europe one manner or another was recommended just because it was *the* manner or because it was *courtois* to act in a given way, such an approach was rather rare among Muslim authors. At the Arabic-Islamic table, things were not done just for the sake of behaving in a given way. If anybody asked: "why should one do it this way?" the answer usually involved a requirement to act in such a way so as not to offend the Muslim co-eater (save the cases which referred to health concerns or required acting in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet). Clearly, the biblical/apocryphal "Recognize that your neighbor feels as you do, and keep in mind your own dislikes"[44] reverberated not only the Jewish approach but also, more broadly, the ancient Near Eastern or Semitic one.

What is interesting, the problem of co-eaters' feelings, brought up in all the works of Arabic-Islamic medieval etiquette literature, was discovered in Europe relatively late. While as early as in the eleventh century al-Ghazālī recommended not to do anything "which others hold to be unclean" ("he should not immerse in the broth or in the vinegar what is left of any morsel he has cut with his teeth"),[45] it was not before the seventeenth century that the *délicatesse* appeared as a justification of certain regulations in the West. But even as late as in the eighteenth century it was still the requirement of being *courtois*, and not of being mindful of the feelings of others, that justified most of the ordinances and bans.[46] In

[43] See Massimo Montanari, "Food Systems and Models of Civilization," in Flandrin and Montanari, *Food*, 69 and idem, "Food Models and Cultural Identity," in ibid., 190. For discussion on food sharing among prehistoric hunters/gatherers see Enloe, "Food Sharing," 1–23.

[44] Sirach, 31:15. Sirach, also known as Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, is accepted as part of the biblical canon by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and most Oriental Orthodox, but not by most Protestants. Therefore, in the present study the book is referred to as "biblical/apocryphal."

[45] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 8 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 16–17); also *Muwashshā* by al-Washshā, 192, 193.

[46] Cf. Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 115; see also p. 80. Those varying attitudes to the question of "caring for others" as represented by the two (i.e. the Arabic-Islamic and the Western)

1672 Antoine de Courtin recommended to always wipe one's spoon before dipping it into the common dish, for the reason of "there being people so delicate they would not wish to eat soup in which you had dipped it after putting it in your mouth." Interestingly enough, medieval European manuals also discouraged biting a slice of bread and dipping it in the common bowl; the recommendation was backed up, however, by the explanation that this was "the conduct of peasants" and not by disgust such behavior might cause.[47]

As far as rules are concerned, it is impossible to unequivocally assert whether manners recommended by the Arabic-Islamic culture were similar to those recommended in Western Europe of that time. Both Western and Arab compendia cover a rather wide range of problems, from elementary instructions ("do not spit on the table," "do wash your hands before the meal") to more sophisticated ones ("do not criticize the food you are offered"). In some cases they are parallel, if not identical, but in some others—significantly different. While, for instance, Islam recommended to lick one's stained fingers after the meal, Europe found it improper. While the West suggested to vomit in case of overfeeding, Islam never mentioned such an option. And while the West seems to have not cared for washing hands after the meal, most of the Arabic-Islamic compendia suggested it. Neither of the two cultures, however, followed the way of the Romans, who used to wipe their stained fingers on the hair of male or female slaves,[48] or the way of the Mongols, who wiped hands on the robe of the host.[49] There is also a wide area of recommendations in the Arabic-Islamic works that do not have their counterparts in European compendia. These include, for example, the problem of the table's shape and of

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medieval "schools" of table manners were one of the most significant reasons that made the gap between them so immense. As far as caring for others is concerned, the Arabic-Islamic manuals may be compared to Erasmus's *De civilitate morum puerilium* (the sixth century), or to the compendia produced in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe rather than to those of the medieval times. Margaret Visser, however, presumes that "care for other people's opinions, the ability to see ourselves as others must see us," only began to develop in the sixteenth century; see Visser, *Rituals*, 63.

[47] Cf. Tannhäuser's *Hofzucht* as quoted in Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 63–4. According to Elias, the medieval world of courtesy and chivalry did not know the "invisible wall" that today makes people ashamed or embarrassed when witnessing certain bodily functions of others (Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 69–70).

[48] See Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 74.

[49] Şavkay, *Timeless Tastes*, 77.

the permissibility of its use and, what is more important, the sophisticated problem of the host-guest relations.

The similarities are sometimes salient—both cultures prescribed to wash hands before eating (though the Europeans, unlike the Arabs, rarely used soap; they also scented water with camomile or rosemary, while the Arabs used rose-water), to sit at a designated place, to pray before eating. Both recommended to give precedence to those of higher rank,[50] to use three fingers for eating (in Europe this was an extremely refined way and a mark that distinguished the upper strata from the lower ones),[51] to have a cheerful face. Both disapproved blowing one's nose at the table, searching through the dish to find the choicest cuts, dipping what was already bitten, eating too much, going for food with greed, and putting the bones or kernels into the common bowl. Also, they both ordained not to criticize the food served and not to pick one's teeth; while the West, however, suggested not to do it with the knife, the Arabic-Islamic culture said not to do it with one's nails.

As for the intended recipients of these ordinances, in principle there was not much difference between the Western and the Near Eastern ones—despite appearances to the contrary. True, European medieval manuals were ostensibly written for a limited circle of nobles and courtiers, while the Arabic-Islamic ones, written to guide members of the Islamic community, were binding for every Muslim. But we should not delude ourselves—neither the secular nor the religious Arabic authors meant their manuals for just any Muslim. They wrote about and for people of means (or, more precisely, for urbanites of means)—the secular for *kuramāʾ*, decent, respected, and well-mannered nobles, the religious ones also for the *ʿulamāʾ*, the members of the scholarly community. In other words, the Arab authors wrote for those who, when invited to a banquet, came riding, assisted by their retinues, for those who enjoyed large houses with large reception halls and armies of servants who cared for the guests and kept the flies away at meal time.

And, what is important, they wrote for the male part of the population only. This should not be surprising—after all, the space around the Arabic-Islamic table, not unlike the Western one, was the men's world.[52] In ancient Greece formal eating of any kind was the preserve of men;

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[50] For the precedence followed in the Mamluk court see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 403.

[51] Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 57.

[52] As Margaret Visser noticed, "all through history, women have been segregated from men and from public power, and 'shielded' from the public view; they have been put

women and children were excluded.[53] In Europe of the Middle Ages women, segregated from men, might sit in a gallery or balcony so that they could watch the men at dinner.[54] In the medieval Near East, women ate—and often also had their food cooked—in their part of the house. And, much like their European counterparts, they were allowed to sit behind the wooden lattice screens called *mashrabiyya* and watch the men eating and entertaining below in the hall.[55]

In the Arabic-Islamic table manners manuals women are not, however, passed over in absolute silence. Ibn al-Ḥājj, for example, used his compendium to mention women as guilty of the fact that some men practiced the "blameworthy" custom of eating from their own bowls and drinking from their own goblets. According to this author, such an improper behavior of some men was "an example of the machinations of the devil who targets the Muslims by means of women, because women know how to find their way to men's stomach. And what they use includes sorcery and other things, because their brains and religion are inferior, as they are the traps of Satan."[56] But Ibn al-Ḥājj, although he did not think highly of women, was also able to show a caring attitude, of sorts. Inspired by Muḥammad's "One feeds his women even if with only a mouthful," he maintained that a man should "feed his wife a mouthful or two."[57] And, moreover, he also recommended that the guests not consume all the food served during the meal. They should leave something on the table for the host's family (i.e. women and children) who "may have designs on those remnants and who have their rights to them."[58]

The two schools of table manners, being products of their own cultures, can hardly be considered as coming from the same basket. Apart from what was said above, there was one more significant difference between them. From the Arabic and Islamic point of view, it was the adherence and

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down, put upon, and put 'in their place'—a place defined by males;" Visser, *Rituals*, 283; see also 273, 275, 279, ff.

[53] The Roman *convivium* differed from its Greek predecessor (*deipnon*) in that—thanks to Etruscan influence—it could include women among participants; see Strong, *Feast*, 13–14.

[54] Visser, *Rituals*, 279. One of the explanations of the motives behind the segregation is that "when men and women were together, they felt constrained to behave very formally; only when the sexes were segregated could they relax and 'be themselves';" ibid., 282.

[55] See above, chapter III.2. "The dining-room," pp. 383–4.

[56] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216.

[57] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 224.

[58] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 231.

devotion to the tradition that counted above all and that was valued most highly; it was the continuance, and not the evolution and change that characterized people's attitudes and constituted the motive behind day-to-day activities. Therefore, the Arabic-Islamic table manners compendia were not—again, unlike the European ones—the vanguard carriers of the courtly *civilité*.[59] Rather, they acted as custodians of ancient refinement that guarded and saved the ageless rules in the multiethnic metropolises of the medieval Islamic world and from time to time reminded people of them. Whatever their functions and features, the Arabic-Islamic table manners compendia—as it often is with works of the savoir-vivre genre—constitute evidence of a system of values, of perceptions and emotions, of *Lebensgefühl*, and, in fact, of the local mentality of that time.[60] In the case of the table manners of the Cairenes and the rules which regulated them, the meaning of the adjective "local" was not always limited to the Egyptian capital or to its Muslim community. "Local" often had a broader meaning of "Near Eastern." The spirit of the Arabic-Islamic recommendations, based on the customs of the pre-Islamic Arabs, had very much in common with what was written in Hebrew by Jesus, son of Eleazar son of Sirach of Jerusalem, circa the year 200 B.C.E.,[61] or what was composed in Syriac by Bar Hebraeus, a Syrian catholicos of the seventh/thirteenth century.[62]

A faithful reconstruction of the way the ordinary, middle-class inhabitants of medieval Cairo behaved at the table on daily occasions is impossible to be made on the sole basis of the table manners compendia. The problem is, however, that beside these compendia we do not have much in the way of reliable information on how ordinary people behaved while eating their meals. Egyptian iconographic material is very poor, almost non-existent (that is why Turkish, Iraqi, and, sometimes, Persian miniatures, beside the few Mamluk-era paintings, were used in the present research).

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[59] Though in the eleventh century apparently a more conservative attitude prevailed: when a Byzantine wife of a Venetian doge tried to use her little golden two-prong fork to eat her food, her behavior caused a scandal in Venice; she was rebuked by the clergy who also called down divine wrath upon her (see Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 68–9). It took over five hundred years for the Europeans to accept the fork; see Visser, *Rituals*, 177.

[60] Cf. remarks by Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 84; and by Stephan Conermann, Tilman Seidensticker, "Some Remarks on Ibn Ṭawq's (d. 915/1509) Journal *Al-Taʿlīq*, vol. 1 (885/1480 to 890/1485)," *MSR* 11/2 (2007): 130.

[61] Sirach, 31, 32.

[62] See above, pp. 390–1, n. 19.

Arab authors were not interested in recording their own routine day-to-day practices. At the same time, European medieval visitors to Cairo, most of whom were merchants and pilgrims passing by to the Holy Land, were not able to systematically observe the ways of the autochthonous population. Lack of personal contact with the local Muslims (and very limited contacts with local Christians), mutual enmity, distrust, and lack of understanding made Egyptians' and Cairenes' lifestyle hidden from the outsiders.

Regarding Egypt, the first concise, professional, and fully trustworthy written record of the food practices came only in the mid-nineteenth century with the invaluable work of Edward William Lane.[63] Of course, Lane's observations, priceless as they are, constitute modern ethnographic material. Applying a source information to a period different from that to which the source itself belonged may seem an illegitimate procedure, but it is not. In the case of studies dealing with traditional societies, conscious using of the later sources if the contemporaneous ones are imperfect or non-existent, is not only a standard but also an indispensable method.

Manners, a heritage worked out and guarded by dozens, if not hundreds, of generations of ancestors, are exceptionally cherished in traditional societies. In Western Europe, the process of "giving up hands and taking up forks" took many centuries to complete; in Cairo, as elsewhere in the Arabic-Islamic world, the traditional manners were even more firmly rooted and thus more enduring. Many of them, endorsed by the Sunna of Muḥammad, with time gained (roughly in the course of the Middle Ages) a new, religiously fortified potency which made them untouchable for many centuries to follow. True, after the Ottoman occupation, the upper classes of Egyptians stuck to Ottoman aristocratic fashions, which they later abandoned to follow European styles.[64] Ordinary people, however, lived traditional lives, for "when the years do not bring anything new, [the Egyptian] is not likely to look for change."[65] Since Lane wrote his survey on the eve of the new era, in many cases, his notes are useful comments on what earlier sources said, beside being an obvious proof of the continuity of local standards.

Due to the fragmentary and somewhat imperfect character of the source information, the reconstruction of the eating behavior of the Cairenes, as

[63] Lane, *Manners and Customs of Modern Egyptians*, London 1836.
[64] Zubaida, "Rice," 97.
[65] Muhammed Shafik Ghorbal, *The Making of Egypt* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1999), 26.

undertaken in the following section, is uneven. Certain practices could be defined in a relatively reliable and consistent way. In many instances, however, the insufficiency of historical material made the investigation impossible. In such cases, the discussion of a given practice or manner had to be restricted to logical conjectures about the behavior or to the prescriptions written in the table manners manuals.

2. Routine Eating Practices

A. *The Common Table. Prerequisites, Conditions and Customs Related to the Idea of Eating*

1. *Hospitality and its Limits*[66]

When in a very distant past the unfriendly environment of the Arabian Peninsula made its dwellers understand that implementing the rule of reciprocal hospitality was a biological imperative, their original idea of solving the problem was relatively simple. Limited, most probably, to a law obliging a man to accommodate a visitor and to share his food with him, the dictate of hospitality was supplemented in time with the attribute of generosity. The custom of hospitable and generous treatment of a guest gradually became one of the illustrious virtues of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Taken over by Islam, it was codified in the Middle Ages and adjusted to the entire religious system. Although fully supportive of the idea of generous hospitality, Islam, however, introduced certain restrictions. These were aimed, above all, at ostentatious affectation and unreasonable generosity such as that represented by Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭāʾī, a poet whose generosity, praised by the pre-Islamic Arabs, obligated him to sacrifice his beloved and famed horse for the sake of treating his guest to food.[67]

The minor modifications notwithstanding, Islam validated the traditional rules of hospitality either by encouraging them or by confirming them where they already prevailed. But Islam not only promoted hospitability, it also taught that satisfying one's appetite made sense only when

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[66] On aspects of the Near Eastern hospitality see also Bichr Farès, *L'honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam* (Paris: Libraire d'Amerique et d'Orient, 1932), 120–1; and above, chapters III.1. "Public consumption," pp. 358–64, and IV.1. "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," pp. 396–7.

[67] See, for example, Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, xii; *EI*², III, "Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭāʾī" by C. van Arendonk.

the meal was eaten in company. In the new religious order, sharing one's meal with others became a good deed, an act of humility which could result in a reward such as the absolution of sins or a blessing. The blessing was particularly likely when the food was offered to pious persons, whose presence at the table was said to have been assisted by angels.[68] The Sunna proclaimed: "The best food is that over which there are many hands;" "Gather together over your food and you will be blessed in it;" "A house which is not entered by a guest is not entered by angels;" or "The Emissary of God used not to eat alone."[69] This meant not only that one should share his food with others, but also that one should be careful not to eat alone. Ibn al-Ḥājj moved so far as to quote an old saying according to which those who "ate alone, beat their slaves or refused to feed them, were the worst of men."[70] Solitary eating could be justified only by therapeutic diet, illness, fasting, or other legally valid excuses.[71]

It is in fact impossible to define to what degree the medieval Cairenes' hospitality resulted from their concern for the spiritual values. Nevertheless, there is no reason to suspect that their behavior in this respect differed from the traditional Near Eastern cultural patterns related to hospitality. Scenes such as that depicted by Sheherazade in "The Christian Broker's Tale," with a Cairene merchant sharing the meal with a client in his shop, remained a norm long after Middle Ages were over. In the nineteenth century Edward Lane could still observe that "shortly after the noon-prayers... he [i.e. the tradesman] eats a light meal... and if a customer be present, he is always invited, and often pressed, to partake of this meal."[72]

Yet, the pre-biblical law of hospitality, however old and persistent, powerful and all-pervasive, was not absolute. For practical reasons, the general rule which forbade the master of the house not to invite a guest

[68] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216, 223; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 7). Inviting someone to eat was considered an act welcomed by God not only by the Muslims of Cairo, but by their Jewish neighbors as well. The hospitality of the latter "was religiously motivated and was extended mainly to needy people and strangers, or to others who had a claim to help (...) where the motive of reciprocity was also present. 'Putting up the wayfarer' was among the religious merits" and constituted "intrinsically a deed of piety for which no reward should be expected, although the reward was likely." Cf. Goitein's comments on the hospitality as practiced by the Jews of al-Fusṭāṭ; Goitein, *Individual*, 28–37.

[69] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 4, 12 (Engl. transl. by Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 7, 30).

[70] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216.

[71] Ibid., I, 216.

[72] Lane, *Manners*, 156.

into the house, could not be left unconstrained. In order to give the host a chance to defend himself against possible intruders, two basic restraints were introduced. One defined the permissible length of a visit, while the other involved a categorical denouncement of *ṭufayliyya*, or parasitism.[73] As for the length of time which medieval guests spent while paying a visit, it seems that it was rarely shorter than two days. This was so for the simple reason that the guests were often coming from afar and usually had to stay overnight. In fact, banquets and parties could last for many days or, in some cases, for weeks.[74] It seems, however, that in the Near East it was generally and traditionally considered improper for a guest to stay longer than three days. Any visit lasting longer than that was, according to the Sunna of Muḥammad, a charity.[75]

As for the question of *ṭufayliyya*, or parasitism, the problem had a long record in history—the unwelcome guests and parasites living at other people's expense were no less bothersome in ancient Rome than in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world.[76] The geographical location notwithstanding, persons of this kind usually used countless tricks in order to attend a food banquet to which they were not invited. The parasites

[73] See, for example, al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 9: "As for entering [people's house] it is not part of the Sunna to visit people during their meal expecting to be fed.... One Tradition says: 'He who walks towards food to which he has not been invited has walked as a transgressor and eaten unlawfully.'" (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 21). Cf. Qurʾanic "God has said: 'Believers, do not enter the dwellings of other men until you have asked their owners' permission and wished them peace'" (24:27). The spirit of Bar Hebraeus's suggestions is in fact very much alike: he maintains that the time of the visit should not correspond to the time of meal; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 182.

[74] As in the case of some fun-loving Cairenes who—depicted in one of the *Arabian Nights* stories—participated in such a long-lasting event, from time to time moving from garden to garden; see "Ali the Cairene and the Haunted House of Baghdad."

[75] Cf. an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, II, 104 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 129). In fact, there is a *ḥadīth* according to which the guest should not stay longer than three days. "Certainly"—comments al-Ghazālī—"if the owner [of the house] were to press [the guest] with a sincere heart, he may then stay on;" al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 17 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 44). Bar Hebraeus's opinion is similar to that expressed by prophet Muḥammad: the host should propose lodgings for the night to those of the guests who came from afar. The guest, however, should not stay longer than three days; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 185.

[76] *Parasiti*, witty people who made their living by attending as many dinner parties as they could, had bothered the Romans just as *ṭufayliyya* troubled the Arabs. Interestingly, "impoverished profiteer who tried to wheedle a meal" was one of the first meanings of the term "parasite" which only much later started to be used in reference to some insects and plants; see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 61–2, 96. On *ṭufayliyya* in the Arab literature see Antonella Ghersetti, "En quête de nourriture: étude des thèmes liés aux pique-assiettes (*ṭufayliyyūn*) dans la littérature d'*adab*," *Al-Qanṭara* 25/2 (2004): 433–62; *EI2*, X, "Ṭufaylī" by Fedwa Malti-Douglas.

of the Arab world were not different. According to al-Jazzār, their most typical way was that the intruder presented himself to the host, greeted him effusively, praised him in front of his friends and, moreover, reproved him for not having been invited. Others tried to convince the host that they were invited by the members of his family. Still others pretended to have belonged to the retinue of one of the "legal" guests, so that the host believed they were coming with the invited persons, while those persons believed the intruders belonged to the retinue of the host.[77]

To cope with such unwelcome guests, owners of the houses and hosts of various banquets usually employed the so-called *ḥujjāb*. Although *ḥājib* is the Arabic for "chamberlain," in this case *ḥujjāb* were not really chamberlains but, rather, security guards whose duties and behavior were apparently not much different from those of modern bouncers or night-club screeners. They were arrogant, rude, and deeply disliked. Generally given a free hand by their employer and thus left unbridled, they acted at their own discretion and often beyond the acceptable limits.[78] It seems that to avoid being suspected of parasitism by someone's chamberlains, it was safer not to incidentally pass by a banquet without having been previously invited to attend it (one of the Arabic terms for "guest" is, by the way, *madʿū*, or "the invited person"). In medieval Cairo, the invitation apparently played also a role of a safe-conduct pass protecting the guest from being harassed by chamberlains.

According to the Islamic scholars who codified the question of invitations, the host was supposed to invite only pious, respectable, and noble persons and to avoid bad and mischievous ones.[79] At the same time, the invitee was advised to be selective about the invitations he received. True, al-Aqfahsī advised to accept any invitation, including ones coming from a faraway place. Moreover, he considered it arrogant and haughty to respond to the invitations from the rich and disregard the invitations from the poor, as such behavior was at odds with the Sunna.[80] But he also added that if the inviting person had acquired his wealth in an illegitimate

[77] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 15a.
[78] See al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 8a.
[79] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 75.
[80] Ibid., 34–8. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, "[a learned man] should not hurry to answer all the invitations, save the invitation for the wedding." But, generally, "obligatory for him is to answer [those invitations] that do not contain clear *munkar* [forbidden action] in them." Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 228; cf. also al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 11–15 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 29–37).

or suspicious way, his invitation should not be accepted.[81] Interestingly, if "an unknown woman invited a man to eat," the affirmative response was not permitted unless the meal was to be shared with other people as well. If the invitation indicated a tête-à-tête meal in her place, the invitation could not be accepted.[82]

However respected the Islamic scholars were in the society at large, it seems that their arguments were not seriously considered as far as the question of invitations was concerned, and it must have been common sense which guided individuals' behavior in this respect. After all, had it been the other way round, many of the *Arabian Nights* stories would never have been created. If anybody in Cairo (or in any other place) decided to invite a bad man, or visit a lonely woman, or attend a wedding party of a neighbor whose income was not well-documented, he certainly did so regardless of what the religious authorities recommended.

2. *The Host and the Guests—General Rules of Behavior*[83]

Obviously enough, an unmannerly or sulky guest could easily get on the banqueters' nerves and spoil the dinner even before it started, and so could a tactless or brusque host. In order to avoid public embarrassment and discomfort, both the host and the guest had to manifest certain finesse in coping with socially sensitive situations. Intuitive or acquired, the ability to follow the rules of savoir vivre with grace was always welcome. The host and the guest, while participating in an event, played different roles. The rules which governed their behavior were different, too.

It was the host who had to attend upon his guests, and not vice versa, which implied that he had a number of duties to fulfill. The host was obliged, for example, to assist his guests in washing hands before the meal, he was supposed to be the first to pronounce *basmalla*, or benedictions opening a meal, and he was the first to start eating.[84] Furthermore, the host should avoid unreasonable and exaggerated generosity, and

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[81] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 37.

[82] Ibid., 35–6.

[83] For more detailed comments regarding particular activities at the table and the eating behavior see the appropriate sections below.

[84] When the food was already brought in, the master of the house, or someone who performed his duties, would start eating without waiting for those who were late; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227. According to al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 62, one should not start eating before others did; he who behaved in this way was considered immoderate in eating and greedy.

should simply offer his guest whatever he could offer at a given moment.[85] The Near Eastern tradition obligated the master of the house to serve his guests personally. Endorsed by prophet Muḥammad,[86] the rule seems to have been followed in medieval Cairo, if only occasionally.[87]

The master of the house, beside looking after his guests, was also supposed to eat with them. While eating, however, he should show restraint until the guests satisfied their appetites, at least partly. Only from then on could he eat with delight, encouraging them at the same time to eat more.[88] Besides, the host was supposed to show the guests his concern and a cheerful face, and to converse with them in a pleasant way. He was supposed not to complain in their presence, not to provoke them to leave, and not to fall asleep before they did.[89] He should order his slaves to care for the guests' sandals[90] and check personally whether the slaves of the guests had all they needed. Ibn al-Ḥājj, who clearly had enough of the Egyptian flies, named one more duty to be performed (though not personally) by the master of the house—to fan the guests and drive the flies away.[91] Upon the guests' departure, the host should show how sorry he was that they had to go.[92]

If one cared for a pleasant and friendly atmosphere, an affected manner, shameful and annoying for the guests, had to be avoided. If, however,

85 The choicest cuts should be presented in front of the guest, so that the latter did not have to stretch his hand across the table; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227, 229. The same is suggested by Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 181.

86 When the guests from Ethiopia visited him, the prophet "took upon himself the responsibility for [serving] the Negus's delegation by himself;" quoted in Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227; also al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 18 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 43)

87 Cf. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 221; see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 293, where the chronicler reports on sultan Qāytbāy who, while holding food banquets for his amirs, walked around and personally filled the amirs' cups with a sugary beverage.

88 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227–8.

89 Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 6a.

90 In Rome it was the guest's attendant slave who cared for the sandals of his master. Having taken them off, the guest donned slippers supplied by the host; see Strong, *Feast*, 30.

91 This was apparently frequently practiced in Cairo, but not exactly the way the theologian considered correct. What he did not accept was the fact that the person who fanned the air was standing, which was "a [non-Islamic] innovation and the way of the Persians/foreigners." According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, a pious person "should care that nobody stands over his head while he is eating." Therefore—he maintained—if the host had to employ a fan bearer, he should "take care that the one who performs this duty is seated, so that [the practice] is freed from resemblance of the Persians/foreigners, from haughtiness and arrogance." See Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217, 228. On the abundance of flies in modern Egypt see Lane, *Manners*, 14.

92 Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 7a.

the master of the house nonetheless decided to favor a guest, he should take care that he did not go too far, that there was no hypocrisy in his behavior and that he indeed pleased the guest with the way he acted. The Islamic recommendations expanded, in a sense, what was recommended in Book of Sirach: "If you are chosen to preside at dinner, be not puffed up, but with the guests be as one of themselves. Take care of them first before you sit down; when you have fulfilled your duty, then take your place, to share in their joy and win praise for your hospitality."[93]

Comprehending all these rules and following them in daily life must have been highly appreciated; yet, this was not enough to make a good and honorable host. Apparently, the standard of the host-guest relations also implied that the host had to have nerves of steel and that, when his guests' comfort was at stake, he was ready to keep a poker face regardless of the misfortune he experienced. To show their readers the right direction to follow, two Cairene authors of table manners manuals from different centuries quoted the same narrative about a decent man who invited his friends to a garden in Damascus, where he held a food banquet (*simāṭ*) for them.

> The man had a son, who was one of the most handsome, most elegant and best-mannered men. In the morning the young man served his father's guests and entertained them. Later in the day, however, it happened that for some reason he climbed the roof of the pavilion which was in the garden, but fell down and died on the spot. His mother and his slave-girls were about to scream, but the father threatened the women with divorce and sending away if any of them talked about what had happened before the guests leave. After all, such news could spoil the good time they were having. So the women followed the father's instructions while the father himself returned to his guests, served the food, manifested joy and made a friendly atmosphere. And when, at some point, the banqueters started to miss the young man and ask about him, the father answered: "He may be asleep." And when the guests woke up in the morning, he offered them food. Only when they were about to leave, the father asked them: "Will you attend my son's funeral, as he died yesterday?" And then he told them the story. [When he finished,] there was no one among the guests who would not admire the man's honor, who would not thank him for his determination, and would not praise the magnificence of his patience and mind.[94]

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[93] Sirach, 32:1,2.

[94] Al-Jazzār (the seventh/thirteenth century), *Fawāʾid*, fol. 6b; al-Ibshīhī (the eighth/fourteenth century), *Mustaṭraf*, 183.

The art of being the host in the Arabic-Islamic world was demanding, as the master of the house was supposed to have not only manners, but also class. It was a quality which involved what the ancient Arabs had called *muruwwa*, a set of virtues that made chivalric braveness, honor, hospitality, and culture inseparable. It also had something in common with the imperturbable attitude that allows an Englishman to repress emotions and show perfect restraint and distance, even in the face of personal tragedy.[95]

Unlike the host, the guest had no particular duties to fulfill. In fact, all he had to do was to behave himself or, in other words, to avoid making false moves and gaffes. The task was not an easy one, especially so that the refined knowledge regarding this aspect of social relations could not be learnt right away. True, one could learn a lot at home, in the mosque, or from the manuals, and it must have been generally known that a guest should not climb up to the ladies' part of the house, or that it was improper to watch the host's women or his family.[96] Also, it was more or less commonly known that the guest was supposed to be modest in his behavior, to eat what was served, not to demand too much from the host, and not to look down on food he was offered, however simple it was.

But a well-mannered man was supposed to know more than that. He should realize, for example, that it was improper to ask the host about anything referring to the house—except the prayer direction and the toilet, that it was impolite not to agree to sit in a place assigned by the host, to bother him before the meal, or to refrain from washing hands.[97] One should also realize that it was impolite to treat the host like one's own servant and the host's house like one's own house. But not everybody realized such subtleties. During numerous social gatherings which he attended, al-Jazzār, an attentive and sensitive party-goer, apparently quite often witnessed gaffes made by his fellow-banqueters. Clearly irritated by their behavior, he recorded all those faux pas and annoying ways—most of which sound familiar today—and collected them in a long list which he subsequently included in his table manners compendium. Al-Jazzār's

[95] In Britain, too, public lamenting over a family member, even of a beloved one, would be considered tactless and devoid of dignity; cf. Kate Fox, *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behavior* (London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2008), 376–8.

[96] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 13a; cf. also Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 14 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 36). Cf. Roman inscription drawn on the walls in Pompeii (or in Herculaneum: Strong is not clear here): "Spare thy neighbor's wife lascivious glances and ogling flatteries, and let thy modesty dwell in thy mouth;" see Strong, *Feast*, 30.

[97] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 11b; quoted in al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 185.

insightful and instructive presentation of examples of improper behavior must have contributed to the popularity of his manual. The list, which deserves to be quoted here *in extenso*, was probably the only source from which the Cairene high society could learn that

> There are guests who enter a house and at once start to arrange things, saying that the *majlis*-sitting room fits here rather than there, and that they would prefer the *īwān*-hall[98] to face this door, and that the wardrobe does not fit where it is. Then they switch to arranging the *majlis* itself, and move the fruits from one place to another, and [continue this way] even if they finally become hungry ... There are guests who leave [the banquet] and go straight to the host's friends [who were not invited], and walk around them, and say how saddened they were by their absence, and protest against their isolation, and criticize the host. And there are guests who, having noticed that the master of the house just confided a secret to a friend of his, disregard the fact that the information was not meant for everybody's ears and say aloud: "One wonders what was it that the master of the house told our companion, Mr. X?" Also, there are guests who prod the host to serve the food and complain about hunger. Moreover, they consider this way of behavior amusing and an example of noble manners, while in fact one can behave like that in his own house, and not in the houses of others. There are also guests who ask the master of the house: "Who is going to sing for us tonight?" "Mr. Y" is the answer. "That's too bad"—they say. "Mr. Z is better than Y." Furthermore, there are those who enter a house and, although they are strangers, ask the host: "How is your wife?," which is an example of extremely wrong and impolite behavior. Furthermore, there are guests who ask the master of the house: "And how is your sexual potency?" Ashamed by the question, the host finally answers: "Look, I am an old man now, my strength and desire grew weaker, my appetite for this art has decreased." So then they say: "If I only could be like you! As for me, my lust increases with every year which passes by, and my mobilization and excitation for this art grows." And they declare this kind of things so that the host's wife can hear them. Look at this foolishness in its pure form! There are also guests who complain about their relations with their women: they mention how much they provide for their wives, what garments they give them, [how much they bestow on them, and how good they are to them],[99] but also how shameless, ill-mannered [and haughty] their wife is with them nevertheless, and how lazy she is. And they do all they can to make the host's wife understand how little she gets from her own husband, which may in the end become the reason of her separation from him. And there is a type of guest who

[98] For more details on *īwān* and *majlis* in the context of the eating space in medieval Cairene home design, see above, chapter III.2. "The dining-room," pp. 382–5.
[99] Addition from al-Ibshīhī, *Musṭaṭraf*, 187.

> admires himself, appreciates his own attire, and is fond of his own smell. When he hears a song, he shows up, manifests amusement, moves his head to make his turban fall and show his hairstyle … Then he gets up and swings so that the host's wife can see how handsome he is and how admirable his moves are … This is in fact an example of utmost oddity, of meddling, avidity, lack of manners and sense of honor. And there are guests who talk about religious doctrines, and say: "Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq (may God be pleased with him) is better than Imām ʿAlī (peace be with him)," or that "Imām ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib is better than Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq." Such behavior is an example of meddling which results in nothing but quarrel and noise … And there are those who give orders to slaves of the host and forbid them things, and humiliate the host's children and, moreover, think this to be the right guidance and education for those who are in the house … And there are also guests who, upon hearing a beggar at the door, give him money without the permission of the master of the house. Others invite people to the banquet without the host's permission … Still others are abnormal, and when a singer appears they start to stamp their feet and clap their hands.[100]

Al-Jazzār's fellow party-goers must have read these words with blush, trying to guess which of their mutual noble acquaintances the author had in mind. At the same time, other readers could have had fun while trying to establish who of the people they knew fitted a given description. But were such examples comprehended or accepted as instructive at all? After all, al-Jazzār's didactics, unlike the technical "wash your hands before the meal" type of instruction, referred to sophisticated traits of human psyche and could not be understood by all. Applying them to oneself required certain modesty, self-criticism, and at least basic natural politeness. Some people, no doubt, were eager to master the correct form and, having learned what was negative, refined their manners. Others, however, were probably not able to grasp the nuances of mannerly ways while still others understood correctness the wrong way. As arrogance or vanity do not easily transform into delicacy and subtleness, many were simply not capable of becoming well-mannered despite their careful reading of a savoir-vivre compendium. And even if sometimes such persons learned not to criticize the design of the host's house or not to rearrange his rooms anymore, they were probably not unable to refrain from boasting about their cleverness in something or from instructing somebody else's children.

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100 Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fols. 15b–17a.

3. *Times of Meals*

Of all the authors of table manners manuals, it was only al-Aqfahsī who defined times of meals in his book. Quoting ar-Rāfiʿī, he pointed out that for the Muslim the time of lunch (*ghadāʾ*) began at dawn and lasted until midday. Afterwards the time of supper (*ʿashāʾ*) started, which lasted until midnight.[101] The two-meal schedule, applied not only by the Cairene Muslims,[102] prevailed in the Near Eastern Mediterranean from antiquity.[103] The custom of eating twice a day, with *ʿashāʾ* being the principal meal, was also practiced by the nineteenth-century Cairenes.[104] As Edward Lane observed, the tradesmen, who repaired to their shops or warehouses straight after breakfast, habitually ate a light meal around the noon-prayer time. The supper was consumed after they had returned home in the evening.[105] Such a schedule was, by the way, also valid for the urban centers of medieval Europe, where people usually had two meals a day: breakfast combined with lunch and supper in the evening.[106]

4. *The Object Called "Table"*

The term "table," used in the present study for the reasons of convenience, is not really an appropriate appellation, if only because the Arabic-Islamic "tables" of the Middle Ages differed significantly from the tables we know. In his work on social life under the Abbasids, M.M. Ahsan has pointed

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[101] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 112–13.

[102] See, for example, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 409, where the morning and the afternoon meals are mentioned (*simāṭ bukra* and *simāṭ ākhir nahār*); ibid., IV, 467, where festive tables of the morning and of the afternoon are mentioned (*asmiṭa ḥāfila bukratan wa-ʿashiyyan*); and ibid., IV, 394 (*simāṭ al-ghadā* and *simāṭ al-ʿashā*).

[103] See Goitein, *Daily Life*, 229–30; Daniel-Rops, *Życie codzienne*, 187–88; entry "Meals" in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 386; Montet, *Vie quotidienne*, 92. However, wealthy Greeks ate one, main meal a day, in the early evening. The Romans ate three meals; the only proper meal of the day was *cena* or *fercula* (supper or dinner) normally taken between about 2.30 and 3.45 in the afternoon in midsummer, and between about 1.30 and 3 in winter; see Strong, *Feast*, 13, 24. On breakfast, lunch and dinner of the Romans see also Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 38–41. In medieval Europe, two meals a day were the norm—dinner and supper, which was a lighter meal eaten just after dusk. During the fifteenth century, however, slight changes began to occur. Supper came later, at 7 or 8 in the evening, and breakfast began to appear, even if only occasionally; Strong, *Feast*, 104.

[104] Lane, *Manners*, 146. However, Gonzales (in Egypt in 1665–6) maintained that Turks in Egypt used to eat three times a day—early in the morning, in the midday, and in the evening; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 182.

[105] Lane, *Manners*, 156. See also Ahsan, *Social Life*, 156–7.

[106] See Gilewska-Dubis, *Życie codzienne*, 110; Gies, *Daily Life*, 245. For details on the times of meals an their evolution in Europe see Visser, *Rituals*, 159–60.

out that in the Arabic-Islamic literature the term *māʾida*, commonly interpreted as "table," actually signifies one of the two types of "tables." The one, known as *sufra*, was in fact a ground-cover or a tray rather than a table. Round in shape and made of cloth, leather, copper, palm-leaves, or straw, it was placed on the carpet or straight on the ground, with people sitting around it. The other, called *khiwān* (pl. *akhwina*), was raised above the ground.[107] Actually, Ahsan's remarks differ slightly from the explanation provided by the seventh/thirteenth-century Egyptian lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr, according to whom *māʾida* designated a *khiwān*-type of table together with the food which was presented on it. If there was no food on it, *khiwān* could not be called *māʾida*.[108]

As for the *khiwān* itself, it could be of various shapes. It could resemble a tray resting on a single, relatively high, conical leg,[109] it could be a tray resting on three shorter legs,[110] but it could also be a box-like object separated from the ground by four tiny legs.[111] Whatever its form, the *khiwān*, or elevated table-top made of wood or copper, was known and used by better-off Cairenes in the eighth/fourteenth century. They might have appreciated it as more fashionable or just more convenient than a traditional piece of leather or a carpet spread directly on the ground. Of course, the *sufra*-style meals, that is meals served on the ground, still prevailed, the social class notwithstanding.[112] But in the eighth/fourteenth-century Cairo the *khiwān* was clearly popular enough to inspire uncompromising

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[107] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 158.

[108] The term "*māʾida*" could also designate the food itself; see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*; also al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 386.

[109] See the *khiwān* represented on a thirteenth-century Syrian illustration to Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ* ("The Physicians' Dinner Party"); the illustration features the old doctor waking up to find his servants seated at the "table" and dining with his young guest, also a doctor; Biblioteca Ambrosiana, A 125 Inf. fol. 35v, repr. in Ettinghausen, *Peinture*, 144; Haldane, *Mamluk Painting*, 77. Although the work originates from Syria, and not from Egypt, Syria was Egypt's close neighbor and it is quite probable that the Syrian kind of objects was used in Egypt as well.

[110] See al-Wāsiṭī's thirteenth-century illustrations to *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī: "Female attendants serving a meal," Bibliothèque nationale de France, arabe 5847, fol. 139v; and "A host attending to the needs of his guests," Bibliothèque nationale de France, arabe 5847, fol. 47v; both repr. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, plate 29 and 30 respectively.

[111] See the *khiwān* on a fifteenth-century Turkish illustration to *Iskandarnāma* in Esin Atil, "Mamluk Painting in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Muqarnas* II (1984): 164, plate 4. However, the work was painted by a Turcoman artist who arrived in Cairo shortly before producing the illustration, and there is a certain probability that he knew the box-like table from his fatherland rather than from watching the Cairene elites' daily life.

[112] See, for example, Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 183; de Villamont, *Voyages*, 230; Coppin, *Voyages*, 114, 125.

Ibn al-Ḥājj to protest against it and preach that "[the learned man] should eat on the ground-cover and not on those tables or on anything similar to them, for these are innovations and there is a kind of haughtiness in them." According to him, the table (*khiwān*) was of no use whatsoever, as the Prophet himself had eaten either on the ground or on the ground-cover (*sufra*), which was sufficient evidence that tables were devices invented by foreigners and, as such, were not to be imitated.[113]

However, it seems that this Malikite scholar's views regarding the *khiwān* were not shared by many in Cairo. Al-Aqfahsī, for example, himself a man of religion, did not devote a single word to the object. Moreover, while referring to what the Westerners usually interpret as "table," he followed other authors of the Mamluk epoch and used the term *simāṭ*. *Simāṭ*, technically denoting both the served food and whatever was spread or put under it, can also be interpreted as "food banquet" or, sometimes, as "tablecloth." In any case, for al-Aqfahsī, as for most of the eighth/fourteenth-century Cairenes, the table apparently was not a problem, particularly so that the illegality of *khiwān*, or a raised table-top, was not altogether obvious from the religious point of view. Al-Ghazālī, for example, was of opinion that one should eat his food from a tray/ground-cover (*sufra*) placed directly on the ground, as this way was the closest to how the Prophet behaved and, therefore, the most appropriate. But, at the same time, al-Ghazālī denied that "eating on a table is proscribed as either distasteful or forbidden, for no proscription of it had been established."[114]

In fact, the present study may not be the right place to praise al-Ghazālī's mind, but it is worth quoting his remarks regarding the *khiwān*-type of table, in order to balance the radical judgments of Ibn al-Ḥājj: "Not everything innovated is proscribed, but only that innovation which is contrary to established Sunna, as it does away with the canonical law while not solving the problem. However, innovation may be required in cases where the circumstances have changed. For there is nothing about a table other than that food has been raised from floor and laid out on it for facility of eating and the like. And there is nothing abhorrent about this."[115] And it was this opinion which finally prevailed. With time the raised *khiwān* was further elevated and modified, so that at some point before the mid-

[113] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 226. Actually, tables were used by various cultures of the ancient Near East, including Egyptians, who ate their meals while sitting at little low tables; see Montet, *Vie quotidienne*, 92.

[114] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 3 (Engl. transl. by Johnson-Davies, in *Al-Ghazālī*, 4).

[115] Ibid., II, 3 (Engl. transl., 4–5).

eighteenth century its shape became in fact very similar to, if not identical with, what is still used in traditional Cairene homes today: "a little round or octagonal stool," on which "a copper dish tinned over, from three to six feet diameter, which is a table" was placed.[116] Or, to use Lane's more accurate words, "a round tray (called 'seeneeyeh' and 'saneeyeh') of tinned copper, or sometimes of brass, generally between two and three feet in diameter, serves as table, being placed upon a stool ('kursee') about fifteen inches high, made of wood, and often covered with mother-of-pearl, tortoise-shell, bone, etc. These two pieces of furniture compose the 'sufrah.'"[117] Apparently, with time the term *sufra* changed its sense and, having displaced the term *khiwān*, and adopted its meaning, was itself replaced by the term *ṣīniyya*.[118]

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[116] Pococke, *Description*, 182.

[117] Lane, *Manners*, 148–9.

[118] As for "a round tray," or *ṣīniyya*, contemporary scholars are of opinion that the object existed in the Middle Ages and that the medieval way of using it did not differ from the way it has been used in post-medieval or modern times. Or, in other words, that in medieval Cairene houses the food was served—analogically to what is described in the accounts written by Pococke, Lane, or by any contemporary eyewitness—on trays, and that the trays were placed on stands which were taken away after the meal; see, e.g., Ibrahim, "Residential Architecture," 49; Behrens-Abouseif, *Islamic Architecture*, 39; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 144; Dreher, "Regard," 67–8. The problem is, however, that the medieval Arabic sources rarely name objects such as *ṣīniyya* or *kursī* (a stool upon which the *ṣīniyya* was placed). Moreover, there seems to be no medieval Arabic iconographic material to confirm the use of such two-piece tables in Cairo. Furthermore, de Villamont (in Egypt in 1590s), informs us that "les Mores, Turcs & tous Mahumetans quand ils veulent manger ... mettans au milieu d'eux leur nappe ronde nomee Sophra, qui est faicte de cuir, s'ouvrrnt & fermant comme une bourse" (de Villamont, *Voyages*, 229–30; also 230–31); Gonzales (in Egypt in 1665–6) confirms the use of "un grand plateau de cuivre" or "une piece de cuir ronde ou natte ronde," put on the carpet; however, he is silent about a two-piece little low table (Gonzales, *Voyage*, 92, and a following illustration). Judging by the words of Jean Coppin, in the mid-seventeenth-century Cairo the urban Turks/Egyptians habitually ate on the ground; a meal served on the (unspecified) table is called by this author "la collation a la Francoise" (Coppin, *Voyages*, 114; see also p. 125, n. 242); see also l'Africain, *Description*, 517. The evidence to prove the medieval use of the above-mentioned two objects is apparently limited to a number of mentions of "*ṣīniyya*" in the Jewish Geniza documents, as well as two little hexagonal *kursīs* once belonging to two Baḥrī Mamluk sultans and now preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. *Ṣīniyya* which was mentioned by ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī, in his description of a dish called "*raghīf aṣ-ṣīniyya*," was a tray of ca. four spans (*ashbār*) in diameter, made of copper, with two handles. It was used as an object on which food was placed, baked, carried, and presented, but it apparently did not serve as a part of a two-piece table; see al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 195–7 (fols. 48*l*–49*r*). Nevertheless, contemporary scholars' opinions, although based mostly on analogy with modern accounts and therefore somewhat anachronistic, are not necessarily incorrect. However, the table composed of a stool and a tray might not have been as popular in the Middle Ages as it is sometimes believed to have been. For a detailed study of the Arabic-Islamic "table" see Dreher, "Regard," 59–68; cf. comments in Goitein, *Daily Life*, 144–5.

B. *The Meal*

1. *Washing Hands*

According to Mark 7:3, "the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not."[119] Jesus of Nazareth did not accept the ostensible and formal character of the practice and taught that "to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."[120] Interestingly, such an approach, eliminating an element of constraint and of ritual observance from the practice, prevailed among both Near Eastern Christians[121] and Muslim Arabs. As for the Arabic-Islamic approach, there is a scene in "The Christian Broker's Tale" in which a merchant of Cairo receives a merchant from Baghdad in his shop. The host arranges something to eat and drink and, with the words "In the name of God," presents the food in front of his guest. The Baghdadi approaches, sits down, and starts to eat with his left hand, which shocks the Cairene merchant. After the meal the guest washes his hand and the host gives him a towel to wipe it. Evidently enough, neither of them washed his hands before the meal—if they did, the Cairene merchant would have noticed during the washing, and not only during the meal, that there was something wrong with the guest's right hand. Moreover, when the same Baghdadi merchant visits his Cairene lover on another occasion and shares a meal with her, the brass basin (*ṭisṭ*) and the ewer (*ibrīq*)[122] are brought in after the meal—but, again, nothing is said of washing hands before it. Apparently, the ritual of washing hands did not constitute an obligatory prelude to the ceremony of eating and, as such, was not always performed.

What can be guessed from the *Arabian Nights* is actually confirmed by the authors of table manners compendia. For example, al-Jazzār's insis-

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[119] Matthew, 15:2; Mark, 7:3; Luke, 11:38.

[120] Matthew, 15:20.

[121] Apparently, Christians did not reject the practice completely, but they did not consider it a ritual obligation, either. The medieval rules of table manners still recommended diners to "wash their hands before they start to eat;" see Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 179.

[122] The vessels which were used for washing hands in the Middle Ages were, in fact, quite similar to those described and pictured by Lane, although some evolution of the form of these objects can be observed. As for the ewer, one of the most characteristic changes concerned the spout that, once straight, became crooked in the modern times. The basin changed its shape, too; moreover, one significant element was added to it, namely, "a cover pierced with holes, with a raised receptacle for the soap in the middle;" see Lane, *Manners*, 147, 148; and Atil, *Renaissance*, illustrations on pp. 68–73; 76–79; 88–95.

tence on that the guest "should not refrain from washing his hands [before the meal]" is an evident suggestion that there were some who did not care for doing that at all.[123] Ibn al-Ḥājj not only confirms the above conclusion, but also explains the question from the point of view of the religious law. "In case [one's hands] were clean, he can choose between washing them or abandoning the washing … But the washing takes priority [over giving it up] … So if there was anything on his hand, or if he scratched his body, or touched his sweat, then he has to wash his hands."[124] Clearly enough, washing hands before the meal, although not a condition *sine qua non* for the eater to start eating, was recommended for the Muslims. At the same time, refraining from washing and eating with one's unwashed hands, although admissible, was not, most probably, encouraged, particularly in the well-mannered circles.

Oddly enough, none of the authors of the table etiquette manuals gave clear or thorough instructions as to how hands should be washed before the meal. Generally, this might indicate that ablutions before the meal were so obvious that there was no particular need to instruct anyone in that matter. Considering the conclusions presented above, however, it seems more probable that in this case the problem was left undiscussed because so little importance was attached to it. Even meticulous Ibn al-Ḥājj did not deal with it directly. His short instruction regarding the question was included in the section devoted to washing the hands after the meal and he suggested that while doing this, the host should behave "in the same manner as he had done before the meal." Which meant, according to the text which followed, that before the meal began, the host was supposed to personally offer his guests an opportunity to perform ablutions. He started the operation by pouring the water from the ewer on the hands (or at least on the right hand)[125] of the most respected from among the present, and then circulated to his right. The master of the house, or the host, should have been the last to wash his hands. In case somebody ate alone, it was his servant who poured the water on his hands.[126] Although it is not directly stated, it is made clear that the eaters washed their hands after having been seated at the table, but before the food was presented.

123 Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 11b.

124 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217.

125 Ahsan, *Social Life*, 158; Lane, *Manners*, 148.

126 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 231; see also al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 48–9. According to Ahsan, "it was general convention [among the Abbasids] that in a banquet the host first washed his hands and the guests followed him;" see Ahsan, *Social Life*, 159.

While washing hands, they probably turned away, or remained at some short distance, from the table.[127] As it was generally considered impolite, at least among the upper classes, to make any noise at the table, one should avoid performing ablutions in the noisy way like, for example, making sounds while spitting out water after rinsing one's mouth. Such a behavior was, as Ibn al-Ḥājj observed, "an innovation and a hateful thing."[128] After the washing, the host provided towels so that the guests could wipe their hands dry. Although the use of a napkin or a towel seems not to have been uncommon in the medieval Islamic world, particularly among the higher orders of the society, in the eighth/fourteenth century attempts were still made to discredit the practice as a foreign innovation.[129]

Obviously, the style in which one's hands were washed varied according to circumstances.[130] While the majority of the Cairene middle and upper class, following the more or less sophisticated etiquette, made use of servants, special vessels,[131] towels, and rose-water,[132] common people must have used simple means and performed their ablutions with whatever was at hand. Some used water from the fountain of the mosque; others used that which was destined for sprinkling the dusty streets and was kept in earthenware bottles.[133]

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[127] Cf. Lane, *Manners*, fig. on 147.

[128] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225; see also al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 14b.

[129] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 232; see also al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 48–9.

[130] For example, Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq, who devoted a chapter of his cookery book to the "etiquette concerning washing the hands before eating and after it," set the standards very high. For him, washing one's hands before the meal was obvious and undisputable and no less important than other elements of the banqueter's personal hygiene: "A well-mannered friend and companion gifted with intelligence and skill should have the palms of his hands washed, his nails clean and carefully cut; what is between his fingers should be carefully cleaned, too.... He should have his face, mustache and nose washed, his forehead cleaned.... He should care to use cyperus (*suʿd*) in the morning, comb his beard, and clean his clothes, especially the turban, on which the eyes fall frequently. He should also perfume himself with incense, musk and *ghāliya* [a perfume made of musk and ambergris (*Galia moschata*)] and [apply] scented powders [*dharāʾir*] onto his hair and clothes;" see al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 332 (cf. also Engl. transl. by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 505–6). Indeed, such advices could work quite well in the leisurely courtly milieu of the Abbasid Baghdad, for which they in fact were written. However, it is difficult to imagine that the military entourage of sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, whose Cairene library possessed a copy of al-Warrāq's book, could care to implement this kind of chic.

[131] That is the brass basin (*ṭisṭ*) and the ewer (*ibrīq*).

[132] Rose-water could serve either for washing the hands (see for example, Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 232, where such a practice is disapproved), or for sprinkling after the washing (see, for example, the *Arabian Nights*, "The Story of Wazīr Nūr ad-Dīn and His Brother Shams ad-Dīn").

[133] The Cairene baker boys, for example, would not probably see anything wrong in making ablutions with water prepared for making the dough or with that which was used for cleaning the oven; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 167, 174.

2. *The Posture*

While sitting at the *sufra* or the *khiwān*, one could not simply sit as he pleased. The Arabic-Islamic postural code was very strict in this respect. Although various authors differed as to details, they generally agreed that the Muslim could sit at the "table" either as if he sat for prayer or with his right knee raised and the left resting on the ground. The former manner implied that the eater rested on both knees and sat on the upper part of his feet which, according to al-Aqfahsī, was the way the Emissary of God ate his meals. Ibn al-Ḥājj also allowed the possibility that the eater sat in such a way that both of his knees were raised. Sitting cross-legged or in any way other than those religiously permitted was contrary to the Sunna of the Prophet and, therefore, forbidden from the religious point of view.[134]

People, however, might not have realized that or, perhaps, they simply did not care too much. This is, at least, what the pictorial evidence indicates. For example, of the two diners who are shown in the forefront of one of the illustrations to Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ* ("The Physicians' Dinner Party"), one sits on his right leg and has his left knee raised, while the other sits on his left leg and has his right knee raised.[135] The upper-class modern Cairenes pictured on one the famous engravings included in Lane's *Manners* did not behave very differently, by the way: of the four men, two sit on their right legs and have their left knees raised, while the other two sit on their left feet and have their right knees raised.[136] Sitting cross-legged seems not to have been avoided, either. In the mid-fourteenth century Frescobaldi claimed to have observed in Cairo people who "spread a skin on the ground, placed a vessel with food in the center, and sat around on the ground with legs crossed or squatting."[137] More than a century later von Harff noted that they "eat and drink, play and talk with each other" while sitting on the carpets, "like tailors do with us," that

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[134] According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 221–2. Al-Aqfahsī, on the other hand, recommended to eat the way the Emissary of God ate his meals, that is to rest on both knees and sit on the upper part of one's feet (a position analogous to what Ibn al-Ḥājj defined as sitting "as if he sat for prayer"). One might also raise his right leg and sat on the left; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 46, 47, 48. On the Prophet's posture see also, for example, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Aṭ-Ṭibb al-Nabawī*, ed. ʿAbd al-Majīd Ṭ. al-Ḥalabī (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrafa, 1998), 177.

[135] Repr. in Ettinghausen, *Peinture*, 144; Haldane, *Mamluk Painting*, 77; for more details on the miniature see above, chapter IV.2.A.4. "The object called 'table'," p. 415, n. 109.

[136] Lane, *Manners*, 150. Elsewhere in the book, however, Lane maintains the Cairenes used to sit with the right knee raised; see ibid., 149.

[137] Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49; Dopp, "Le Caire," pt. I, 117–49.

is, cross-legged.[138] The cross-legged posture was, by the way, not unusual among the Turks who, from the sixteenth century on, constituted the ruling elite of Cairo.[139]

Apparently, the question which knee could be raised and which had to rest on the ground or whether the cross-legged posture was permitted or not was not of key importance in daily practice. What, for some reason, seems to have mattered much more in the Arabic-Islamic postural code was the ban on reclining during the meal. Ensuing directly from the Sunna of the Prophet who did not eat while reclining, the ban must have been popularized by Islamic theologians who, having considered the posture a manifestation of haughtiness, forbade Muslims to practice it.[140] Whether the taboo was observed because it was founded on Muḥammad's example or because such was a more ancient local custom is not altogether obvious. Interestingly, the attitude of the Near Eastern Christians of the Middle Ages basically did not differ from the Muslim one—Bar Hebraeus, too, recommended not to recline while eating but to sit straight.[141] As many of the recommendations referring to eating behavior were common for both the Muslim and the Christian Arabs, the fact that both communities denounced reclining should not be surprising.[142] However, if one takes into consideration that Jesus and his disciples possibly reclined while eating their meals, the Last Supper included,[143] the attitude of Bar Hebraeus becomes intriguing. Actually, it may mean that in the medieval Near East the reclining posture was known from elsewhere than the Palestine of the

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[138] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 112; on "tailor-fashion" posture see also Gonzales, *Voyage*, 183 ("Ils se croisent les jambs, comme les taileurs de nos Pays-Bas, assis sur leur table au devant le fenêtre"), and fig. on p. 185.

[139] The cross-legged posture was apparently not unusual among the Turks who, from the sixteenth century on, constituted the ruling elite of Cairo; see, for example, a sixteenth-century illustration from Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's *Nuṣretnāmā*, where Muṣṭafā Pasha sits cross-legged at the banquet (reproduced in Marthe Bernus-Taylor, "Nourritures terrestres, nourritures mystiques," *Banquets d'Orient*, 121–33.

[140] See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 5); Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 48; an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 116–17 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 133). Ibn al-Ḥājj adds, though, that the *salaf* reclined while eating light items, such as greens and the like. "And this was because of what was said of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib—may God be pleased with him—who ate dates while reclining;" Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230.

[141] Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 177.

[142] At the same time, Christians, like Muslims, were permitted to have their right knee raised while sitting at the table; see Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 177.

[143] Visser, *Rituals*, 155. Donceel-Voûte, "<Coenaculum>", 72–3; entry "Meals," in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

early Christian era. And that, moreover, it was Christians who adopted the ban against reclining from the Muslims, and not the other way round.

As a matter of fact, the words "I do not eat when reclining," and "I am a slave and I eat like the slave eats" as pronounced by Muḥammad, bring to mind the Roman mode of eating, according to which the citizen reclined while the slave sat on the ground at the table.[144] But it was not the Romans who generated the negative perception of the posture in the Arab minds.[145] True, reclining during the meal was practiced, at least on a limited scale, in the Roman Palestine of the first decades of the Christian era.[146] However, when the Arabs conquered Palestine, the custom of reclining while eating seems to have been forgotten not only in the region but also in Rome itself, where it had died out about the fifth century C.E., soon after the fall of the Western Empire.[147] As the Byzantines generally did not practice this way of eating, the Arabs of the Muḥammadan generation could not know the posture from the ex-Roman or Byzantine Palestine. They must have become acquainted with it in the neighboring Persia, where reclining

[144] Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 63.

[145] And it was not the Romans who invented it, either. Actually, the Romans adopted the custom of reclining during the meal in the second century B.C.E., when they learned the use of dining couch from the Etruscans and upper-class Greeks. The latter, in turn, gained the knowledge of reclining on couches in the Near and Middle East about the eighth-seventh centuries B.C.E., when they came into fairly close contact with the region. It was there that they saw people in formal gatherings who ate while reclining on couches. This was practiced in Assyria (the earliest representation of the posture seems to be a famous Assyrian relief from the palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh; see Bober, *Art*, 76; also Collon, "Banquets," 29.) as well as in Samaria (where, by the eighth century B.C.E., the custom was castigated by the Hebrew prophet Amos; see Amos, 6:4–7, which is the earliest literary record referring to the practice). Cf. also Donceel-Voûte, "<Coenaculum>," 71; Daniel-Rops, *Życie codzienne*, 188–9. Frances Pinnock, "Considerations on the 'Banquet Theme' in the Figurative Art of Mesopotamia and Syria," in *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Lucio Milano (Padova: Sargon srl, 1994), 17; Jean Bottéro, "Boisson, banquet et vie sociale en Mesopotamie," in ibid., 3–13.

[146] It is not obvious, however, whether this was simply a continuation of an old local habit or the practice was reintroduced to the Palestine by the Romans.

[147] Obviously enough, the change from a reclining position to a sitting position at the table could not be a one-time event. The evolution apparently took some 200 years: there are records confirming that already in the fourth century C.E. some people sat upright but, at the same time, there is a number of the sixth-century records and mosaics which show people reclining. As Roy Strong put it: "So we see that the old Roman way of dining lingered on in these crumbling and disintegrating buildings [i.e. Roman villas]." Beyond the sixth century C.E., however, "reclining survived only in the most exclusive of contexts, in the great imperial and papal palaces of the early Middle Ages, revived, it is said, by Pope Leo II at the close of the eighth century." See Strong, *Feast*, 40–2, 58.

during the meal was still practiced in the days when Islam was born.[148] And, in fact, this might have been why the Arabic-Islamic, but also the Arabic-Christian culture denounced the practice. Had the Arabs known it from elsewhere, as from some modest Palestinian dwellings similar to those in which Jesus had dined, they would not have considered it "haughty," or associated it with "the way of the tyrants."[149] And they probably would not have disapproved it.

Be it because the censure was so effective or because the Cairenes did generally not feel like reclining while eating, this posture never became an element of their behavior. Throughout the Middle Ages, as well as in the centuries to follow, the local population preferred to stick to the traditional floor- or ground-sitting posture. In the nineteenth century, if the party was numerous, the tray was still placed in the middle of the room, and Egyptians sat around it "with one knee on the ground, and the other (the right one) raised."[150] But with time the ground-level lost its monopoly as a sitting place. From the seventeenth or eighteenth century on, the elevated Turkish-style sofas, or *maṣṭaba*-like platforms covered with mats, mattresses or pillows and arranged so as to encircle the room, were becoming more and more fashionable.[151] By the mid-nineteenth century they were commonly used both in the homes and in the coffeehouses.[152] Interestingly, the introduction of this new type of furniture did not imply the immediate relaxation of the archaic postural codes.[153]

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[148] In the eighth-ninth centuries C.E., the Persian artists could still picture a libation scene with the ruler leaning on his elbow and propped on a pile of cushions. There are also numerous examples of the Iranian miniatures from much later epochs (including the late seventeenth century) that picture rulers and princes reclining on cushions, and occasionally holding a cup or a fruit. See A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Iranian *Bazm* in Early Persian Sources," *Banquets d'Orient*, 95–120.

[149] See an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 116–17, where it is stated that "It is the tyrants who sit at ease at a meal" (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 133). Interestingly, according to al-Ghazālī, there were some Bedouin Arabs who sometimes ate "while lying prostrate on the stomach;" see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 6).

[150] Lane, *Manners*, 149.

[151] Ibid., 23. Cf. also above, chapter III.2. "The dining-room," p. 381, n. 106.

[152] For the design of a cafeteria see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, 158–9. See also David Roberts's drawing representing a nineteenth-century Cairene cafeteria, where the customers sit either on the premises' ground-level floor or on the elevated *maṣṭaba*-level.

[153] The chair-sitting posture started to prevail probably as late as the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century. With time the Cairene cafeterias changed the style and a high, regular, wooden, Western-like Egyptian bench replaced the sofa. See, for example, a photograph in Hattox, *Coffee*, 15 (some modified examples of this type of furniture are still present in some coffee shops of Khān al-Khalīlī). In this context it may be interesting, by the way, that Giorgio Gucci, while traveling across the late-fourteenth-

3. *Serving; Presentation and Tableware*

In the culture of the West, two styles of food serving generally prevailed. The one, known as the "*à la française*," implied that all the food, including sweets and fruits, was served at once and the guest did the choosing. In the other style, known as "*à la russe*," dishes followed in successive courses, which means that the same food was offered to all.[154] Interestingly, these two ways were not very different from what was practiced in the nineteenth-century Cairo, where one of the locally followed styles implied that "only one dish was put on at a time, after the Turkish mode." In this case "each took from it a few mouthfuls and it was quickly removed to give place to another." The other style—which was "the common fashion of the country"—was that "several dishes of tinned copper, or of china, containing different kinds of viands, vegetables, etc.," were "placed upon the tray." In such a case "each person [took] of any that he [liked], or of every one in succession."[155]

As for the ways the food was served in medieval Cairo, the source information is too fragmentary and ambiguous to allow for a detailed reconstruction. One may nevertheless conclude from the records that the two styles mentioned by Lane in the nineteenth century had also been followed in the earlier epochs. The noteworthy description of food served in the manner analogous to the *à la française* style is probably Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr's narrative referring to the festive banquets held by the

century Syria, observed that "the Saracens set themselves down on benches on the street to eat;" Gucci, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 143. For the anthropological approach to various sitting postures see Gordon W. Hewes, "World Distribution of Certain Postural Habits," *American Anthropologist* 57 (1955): 231–44.

[154] Actually, rules of the two styles were much more sophisticated. In the service "*à la française*" meals came in services—two, three, or four of them. The number of dishes for each course was calculated on a fixed ratio of dishes to diners. A four-course meal for 25, for example, meant a hundred of dishes. Increased number of diners did not mean greater quantity of the same dishes. On the contrary, it demanded more different dishes. When one course ended the dishes were cleared and replaced by the next course. In practical terms, this meant that dishes did not stay on the table much longer than about 15 minutes. As for service "*à la russe*," it appeared as a novelty in the end of the nineteenth century. Once the guests were seated, each diner was presented by a footman with an already-filled plate with the food prepared to be eaten, filleted or cut into slices and combined with an appropriate sauce, garniture or side dish. A series of courses were served in this way, each arriving from the kitchen ready to eat or, in the case of larger dishes, to be carved by the servants at side tables. See Strong, *Feast*, 231–2, 237, 295–6, 299. On the two styles as followed in Europe see also Visser, *Rituals*, 196–210; Beardsworth and Keil, *Sociology*, 102. Cf. Roman and Athenian styles of service, as discussed in Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 70–2.

[155] Lane, *Manners*, 150.

Fatimids on the occasion of *ʿīd al-fiṭr*, or the festival ending a month of fasting.[156] The evening buffet banquets served to an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and including various fried dishes, cold snacks, fried cheese, cream with molasses, bananas, and condiments, constitute an illustrious example of this kind of serving, too.[157] Ibn al-Ḥājj, on the other hand, confirms that serving comparable to that *à la russe* was also practiced: "if there is a variety of dishes [prepared for the guests], and only one of them is served [at a time]..., the master of the house should inform his guests that there are still such and such dishes waiting to be served... In the same manner he informs the guests about sweets, if these were not brought in together with the food. The same applies to fruits, snacks [*nuql*], and other things."[158] At the same time, the theologian recommends that if there were several dishes, the host should serve the light ones first.[159] Ibn al-Ḥājj's recommendations point out—albeit very vaguely—that apart from the *à la française* and the *à la russe* modes of serving there was also a style which involved serving dishes by courses, according to the kind of food. Such meal was recorded, for example, in 783/1381, when the great amir Barqūq held a food banquet for his amirs during which first the "main course" (*simāṭ jalīl*), then the sweets (*simāṭ ḥilwā*), and in the end the fruits were served.[160] Similarly, during a party held in 800/1398 by Barqūq—then already the sultan—on the occasion of the birthday of the Prophet, first the "main course" was consumed and only then the sweets were brought in.[161]

The above-mentioned accounts, fragmentary and inexact as they are, point to a certain liberty in the domain of food serving in medieval Cairo. This, in turn, suggests there were no categorical or clear-cut rules regulating behavior in that respect.[162] As a matter of fact, such rules could not be established—if only because the Arabic-Islamic culture had no appropriate models to follow. The pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabs did not know the notion of food variety, nor that of a multi-course meal (*alwān*

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[156] For more details see below, p. 430.
[157] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210; cf. Dreher, "Regard," 64.
[158] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 231.
[159] Ibid., I, 231. Cf. another instruction of his which, echoing the Galenic allopathic contraries, recommends to "combine foods and eat the heavy with the light, the moist with the dry, and the hot with the cold;" see ibid., I, 226.
[160] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 441.
[161] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 494.
[162] According to Ahsan, the Abbasid elites' style was that the guests had a menu presented to them and everyone was served what he wished; see Ahsan, *Social Life*, 159.

aṭ-ṭaʿām). As their menu consisted mostly of dates and meat boiled in salted water, the question of how to serve multi-course meals was naturally excluded from both the Arab customary law and the Sunna of Muḥammad. It was only in the course of the conquests that Arabs learned and adopted the idea of a complex, multi-dish repast.[163] This, however, did not result in establishing any particular regulations regarding the style of food serving.

The only attempts to regulate this sphere were indirect and resulted from the fact that some authors, inspired either by the example of pious forefathers (*salaf*) or by medical indications or both, tried to define what kind of food should the meal start with. However, their suggestions regarding appropriate starters, instead of providing some explicit guidelines, introduced additional confusion into the question.[164] Some authors, using the example of ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib, suggested that salt was the appropriate starter.[165] According to others, the best starters were fruits,[166] while some maintained that the best thing to serve after the fruits was meat and thick broth called *tharīd*, after which sweetmeats were to be offered.[167] Still others had no doubts that the meal should start with bread, which was to be served before the condiments (*idam*) were brought in.[168]

[163] See aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, II, 515; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 177 ("Arabs did not know varieties of food and what they ate was meat boiled in water with salt; and it was like that till the times of Muʿāwiyya who introduced varieties.").

[164] See also above, pt. I, chapter II.7. "Fruits," p. 270. The Christian Arabs were apparently familiar with the confusion regarding the order of foods, too; see Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178.

[165] According to the saying ascribed to ʿAlī, "From him who starts his meal (*ghidhāʾ*) with salt, God will remove seventy kinds of misfortune and it is recommended that he also finish with salt;" quoted in al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 17 (Engl. transl. also in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 48), and in al-Aqfahsī's *Sharḥ*, 90; see also an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 112 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 132), where the version of the saying differs slightly and reads: "he who begins and finishes his meal with salt, gets relief from seventy two diseases, among them leprosy and leucoderma"). Starting and finishing the meal with salt is also recommended by al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 333 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 505).

[166] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 15 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 38). Al-Aqfahsī, apparently relying on al-Ghazālī, maintained that "if fruits were brought with the food, it is recommended, from the medical point of view, to eat them before the food, for they are faster to digest;" see al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 50. Cf. a remark quoted by al-Ibshīhī: "I ate a bite of pear and a bite of apple, and then food was served..." which may confirm that the option recommending that fruits be served as *hors d'œuvres* was relatively popular; see al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 185.

[167] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 15 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 38–9).

[168] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 228. Oddly enough, a few pages after this Ibn al-Ḥājj quotes an example of the *salaf* who "were reported to have preceded the [proper] meal with meat;" *Madkhal*, I, 230. See also a scene in Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ* ("The Phisicians'

Actually, the confusion as to what food should be served first was not limited to the Muslim milieu only. The Near Eastern Christians, too, had to choose between various schools. One of them maintained that the meal ought to start with fresh fruits, as these were perishable. Another taught that the most delicious dishes should be offered first. Still other, knowing that a hungry person would eat whatever he was given, thought it proper to serve the most delicious foods at the end of the meal.[169] As for the modern times, Lane did not provide any precise data regarding the question of starters, either. He only stated that in the Egyptian meals "sweets [were] often mixed with stewed meat" or that "various kinds of sweets were also served up, and often in no particular order with respect to other meats."[170]

As for the art of food presentation, it seems that for routine, informal meals dishes were neither decorated nor presented with particular care. In medieval Cairo, where much of the daily food was cooked in the street kitchens, meals were probably served either in brass *porte-manger* containers[171] and pots in which they were brought from the cook's, or in bowls to which they were ladled. Most often, the pot was of the *qidr* type, made of soapstone or pottery, or of the *dast* type, a flat-bottomed utensil with inward-sloping sides several inches high,[172] made of tinned copper and, sometimes, apparently also of soapstone and pottery. Such a pot, before it was put on the table, should have its edges cleaned from what had stuck there during cooking.[173] As far as other kinds of table vessels were concerned, food was generally served in large communal bowls (*qaṣʿa*),[174] platters (*ṣaḥfa*),[175] smaller bowls (*zubdiyya*),[176] and tray-like plates

Dinner Party") in which a greedy host encourages his guest to start the meal with vegetables (apparently to make him fill his stomach with vegetables so that he is unable to eat too much after that), 19; also p. 14, where bread and chicory are served as starters.

169 Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178.

170 Lane, *Manners*, 151.

171 For more on the containers see above, pt. I, chapter I.5. "Customers," p. 125.

172 Perry, "Familiar Foods," 286.

173 See above, pt. I, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 190, n. 270.

174 The vessel is mentioned in, for example, Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225, 226; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 76. *Qaṣʿa* was generally large enough to hold food for ten persons; if destined for domestic use it was usually made of glazed ceramics; its diameter ranged, probably, between 32–38 cm; see Atil, *Renaissance*, 146–67, and illustrations showing examples of metal bowls, 102–3. *Qaṣ'a* is discussed by Ahsan in the context of the Abbasid table; see Ahsan, *Social Life*, 123.

175 The vessel is mentioned in, for example, Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225; Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, in Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 68. *Ṣaḥfa* was supposed to be large enough to hold food for five persons; cf. models repr. in Atil, *Renaissance*, 146–67; and Ahsan, *Social Life*, 123.

176 The vessel is mentioned in, for example, Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216, 230; al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 12b; for possible diameters cf. Atil, *Renaissance*, 146–67. For more details on *zubdiyya* and other vessels see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 145–7.

(*ṭabaq*).[177] Plates and bowls, used for serving soupy and saucy dishes, were usually made of glazed ceramics, china, copper, tinned copper, or brass. Ordinary, unglazed porous pottery was considered unclean once used, and vessels made of it were supposed to be disposed of.[178] Apart from those more or less regular vessels one could also simply use a loaf of bread. In the Arabic-Islamic world, very much like in ancient Rome or in medieval Europe, bread, put directly on the table, could serve as the eater's individual plate upon which a piece of meat was put if it was "too large for a single mouthful."[179]

Although the Cairene table culture, like that of the rest of the medieval Arabic-Islamic world, generally followed the ancient tradition of using common vessels, in the eighth/fourteenth century one could observe tendency to use individual tableware, as the local men, most probably of the middle- or upper classes, ate from their own bowls (*zubdiyya*) and drank from their own goblets (*kūz*).[180] According to Ibn al-Ḥājj's interpretation, such practices were "an example of the machinations of the devil who works them on against the Muslims by means of women."[181]

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[177] The vessel is mentioned in, for example, al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 62 (where a melon is put on it). Cf. Ahsan, *Social Life*, 123.

[178] In Cairo, the unglazed pottery vessels were used by, for example, milk and cheese dealers who stored their merchandise in them, as well as by the lower standard street cooks who serve in them food to the poor. Some of the authors of cookery books strongly advised to buy a new pot on each occasion; see Marín, "Pots and Fire," 292–3; cf. similar way of treating unglazed clay vessels in India; Visser, *Rituals*, 305. Clay vessels were also considered unclean by Jews (Daniel-Rops, *Życie codzienne*, 189). In Rome, too, cheap unglazed pottery was thrown away after one or two uses because it absorbed food smells and stains; see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 74.

[179] Lane, *Manners*, 149. See also Gonzales, *Voyage*, 183. Cf. medieval European trencher slices that, trimmed into squares or rectangles, were used by the diners as bases on which to place fairly solid pieces of food such as slices of meat cut from the roast. After the banquet such trenchers, soaked in meat juices, were given to the poor together with the rest of left-overs. One could also wipe his hands on the bread and throw it to the dogs. In the nineteenth century, Lane could still observe that "the bread often serves as a plate" or that "when a person takes a piece of meat too large for a single mouthful, he usually places it upon his bread;" Lane, *Manners*, 149, 150.

[180] Unlike the Western goblet, the *kūz* had a handle. This "common drinking cup" could be made of fine earthenware, of regular earthenware, or of glass. Silver cups were rare; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 148. For a picture of a small glass cup originating from Egypt of the ninth-eleventh centuries and preserved in Victoria and Albert Museum, London, see *Islam: Art and Architecture*, ed. Markus Hattstein and Peter Dellus (Cologne: Könemann, 2000), 154.

[181] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 216. The engravings included in Lane's *Manners* rather clearly show, however, that by the nineteenth century the Cairenes used individual plates or bowls, in addition to the communal bowls in which the food was brought in from the kitchen. Also wine and sherbets where drunk from separate glasses and cups. Lane, *Manners*, 153 and illustrations on pp. 147, 150, 154.

Naturally enough, the style in which dishes were presented must have been more sophisticated in the case of more formal food banquets. Such banquets were prepared either in large private kitchens in rich people's houses or were ordered from street kitchens which catered for parties. But even then the decoration seemed not to have been excessively elaborated. Usually, it was limited to dyeing the preparation with saffron, garnishing it with eggs or egg yolks, or sprinkling it with pomegranate seeds, olives, coriander, chopped rue, mint, pieces of cucumber and celery, sumac, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, etc.[182] Interestingly, the Arabs never cared to decorate their dishes the way the Roman cooks had been doing on formal occasions. One of the main reasons behind the Arabic-Islamic approach must have resulted from the consistency of the Arab food which was prepared so as to enable the eater to pick morsels from common heaps or scoop them up with bread from the common bowl.

True, like their ancient Roman counterparts, the cooks of the Arabic-Islamic world served whole roasted animals, too, mostly lambs and birds. Unlike in Rome, however, the Arabic-Islamic *maîtres de table* never thought of a presentation involving, for example, models of hot burning ovens, or elaborate still-lives modeled from various delicacies, which would moreover enter the dining-room in procession.[183] The festive Arabic-Islamic banquets were arranged according to standards of esthetics radically different from those which had governed the Roman tables. For example, the evening food banquet held by the Fatimids on *ʿīd al-fiṭr* involved 21 plates (*ṭabaq*, in this case apparently giant-sized ones) on each of which there were 21 roasted muttons, 350 chicken, 350 hens, and 350 pigeons, arranged as high as the height of a tall man. The gaps between the plates were filled with other plates, each of which contained seven chickens immersed in various preparations, both of sweet and savory kind. There was also properly arranged bread and thin slices of dyed dry sweets. The dishes were presented on golden, silver, and china plates, the overall number of which reached almost 500, while the construction was arranged on the round, giant, silver table tray. As the chronicler observed, "it took half a

[182] For a more detailed discussion on the food decoration in the Arabic-Islamic cuisine see Marín, "Beyond Taste," 205–14.

[183] See Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 68. In the Arabic-Islamic food culture figurative shapes as decorative elements were restricted to sweets; see above, pt. I, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," pp. 311–12.

night to fix all that."[184] Obviously enough, the account, recorded by the Fatimid chronicler Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr and depicting the banquet held in the caliph's palace in Cairo, had nothing in common with how the middle-class Cairenes/Fusṭāṭis had their food presented. The food served to the latter must have been more like that served on a Turkish table of the mid-eighteenth century, with "bread, small dishes of pickles, salads, and the like"[185] put round a tray, or a ground-cover.

4. *Starting the Meal*

When the food was brought in, it was the master of the house, or someone who performed his duties, who was supposed to start eating.[186] The act of consuming food had to be preceded by pronouncing the so-called *basmalla*, or the invocation to God (*bismi ʾllāh*, or "in the name of God"). *Basmalla*, pronounced in "low but audible voice," was, to use Lane's much later words, "considered both as a grace and as an invitation to any person to partake of the meal."[187] Also in this case, it was the master of the house who was to do it first. The guests pronounced the *basmalla* after him. Pronouncing the invocation was recommended even if somebody came late, in the middle of the meal.[188] This fundamental ordinance clearly was not performed in the same manner by everybody. For instance, there were people who pronounced the words "In the name of God" with the first mouthful, and the words "In the name of God the Compassionate" with the second mouthful they took. Then, with the third, they said "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful" and, after that, they invoked God over every mouthful. But this was, it seems, neither popular nor correct.[189]

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[184] Ibn aṭ-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzha*, 212–14.

[185] Pococke, *Description*, 182, and plate 57.

[186] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227. Besides, no one should start eating before the others do, for the one who does so is considered immoderate in eating and greedy; see al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 62.

[187] Lane, *Manners*, 149. On benedictions opening a meal in Jewish culture see Goitein, *Individual*, 35. For Bar Hebraeus's recommendations for the Christians see his *Īthīqūn*, 178. On prayer as an initiatory rite before dinner see Visser, *Rituals*, 141–3.

[188] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 49.

[189] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 221. Which is, for instance, recommended by al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 7), which was, by the way, analogous to Bar Hebraeus's recommendations, Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178. Cf. also de Villamont, *Voyages*, 230, where it is stated that "Premier que de manger il font une bresve oraison à Dieu;" and

5. *Techniques of Eating*

Although none of the manuals discussed mentions the necessity of tucking up sleeves before eating, this operation must have been indispensable if one considers the typical, wide-sleeve cut of Arab and Egyptian garments.[190] In the Near East of the Middle Ages, like in Rome, in India, and in the Near East of antiquity, one ate with his right hand only—the left one never touched food, "excepting when the right was maimed."[191] Generally, the Muslim was supposed to "eat with three fingers of his right hand, and these were the index finger, thumb, and the middle finger."[192] Thick *tharīd*-broth, and the like preparations, were eaten with five fingers.[193] Neither knives nor forks were used at the table. Chicken and other fowl, when placed upon the table whole, could be dissected with fingers. According to Goitein, whose remarks refer to the local medieval Jewish community, "meat was cut in the kitchen."[194] Pococke, on the other hand, who observed the Egyptian and Cairene daily life in the eighteenth century, noted that they "tear the meat with the hand; and the master of the house often takes pieces in his hand, and throws them to the guests, that he would pay an extraordinary compliment to."[195] However, personal spoons, prob-

Gonzales, *Voyage*, 183, where it is said that "Ils se jettent sur leur nourriture sans bénénediction, ni prière ou cérémonie quelconque."

[190] In fact, not everybody had his sleeves wide, but those who had, must have tucked them up, as did the banqueters represented on the famous thirteenth-century Iraqi illustration to *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī; see "Banquet scene," Saint Petersburg, Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences, MS S.23, 205, repr. in Ettinghausen, *Peinture*, 113. Rolling up the sleeves is mentioned, for example, in al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 120 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. transl. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 17). Almost three centuries later Muṣṭafā ʿAlī observed in Cairo that "the violent appetite of certain grandees and *mollas* is indescribable. When they come to a banquet they tuck up their sleeves and enter the battle;" *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 50. In the mid-nineteenth century the Cairene upper middle-class still practiced the custom: "Each person bares his right arm to the elbow, or tucks up the hanging end of his sleeve;" see Lane, *Manners*, 149, fig. p. 150.

[191] See Lane, *Manners*, 151. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230, "it was said that the Satan ate and drank with his left hand;" see also al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 50 and Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178; de Villamont, *Voyages*, 231. For a short discussion on the disqualification of the left hand in the food context as practiced in various cultures see Visser, *Rituals*, 170–73.

[192] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230.

[193] Ibid., I, 230; see also al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 50; cf. the observations of de Villamont: "when they take their meal they do not use the forks, as do the Lombardians and Venetians, but they eat with three fingers or with five, because they are of opinion that the Devil eats with two" (de Villamont *Voyages*, 230–1).

[194] See Goitein, *Daily Life*, 148. Leo Africanus, however, mentions that some Egyptians carried with them a knife for cheese; see l'Africain, *Description*, 516.

[195] Pococke, *Description*, 183.

ably made of wood, ebony, or tortoise-shell, seem to have been in use.[196] Some of those who were well-off, particularly from among Mamluk amirs and sultans, used silver or golden spoons.[197] Although by the mid-eighth/fourteenth century the instrument was known to the Muslims for a long time, Ibn al-Ḥājj could by no means accept using it. For him the spoons were an example of innovation and a form of luxury. Moreover, he also considered them a manifestation of disgusting and "unhygienic" attitude (to use contemporary terminology), because first "one puts the spoon in his mouth, and then he puts it back into the food."[198] Therefore, one should not use spoons, "unless there was an excuse for that."[199] Although Ibn al-Ḥājj's criticism regarding the spoon suggests the instrument might have been relatively common in medieval Cairo, it is in fact difficult to confirm whether this was indeed the case. Traditionally, food in the Near East was eaten with bread, the piece of which was either dipped in the dish or was "doubled together, so as to enclose a morsel of meat etc."[200] And it seems very much probable that in medieval Cairo it also was bread, and not the spoon, which was preferably used to scoop the food with.

As for bread, generally it was not supposed to be cut with knife, bitten, or grabbed with teeth.[201] The traditional Near Eastern way was to break small pieces off the loaves. This was, in fact, not very much different from contemporary French or English culture of the table.[202] Nevertheless, in medieval Cairo bread was occasionally cut with the knife. This, however, seems to have been practiced only in order to cut round loaves in the half,

[196] According to Goitein, spoons were not used at the table; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 148. De Villamont mentions wooden and silver spoons; see de Villamont, *Voyages*, 229–30. Rice, however, was eaten with hands; see Gonzales, *Voyage*, 514. For the nineteenth century see Lane, *Manners*, 149, 150.

[197] See Idrīs Ibn Baydakīn Ibn ʿAbd Allah at-Turkumānī al-Ḥanafī, *Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-Ḥawādith wa-l-Bidaʿ*, ed. Subhi Labib (Kairo: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo / in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH/, 1986), 203.

[198] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 222.

[199] Ibid., I, 222.

[200] Lane, *Manners*, 150.

[201] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 229, 230; cf. Bar Hebraeus, who also recommends not to cut the bread with the knife; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178.

[202] Interestingly, according to Margaret Visser, "the change to breaking rather than cutting bread, among the eighteenth-century French aristocracy, seems to have been part of the move towards an elegant simplicity in manners as the new hallmark of good taste;" Visser, *Rituals*, 186. For the way of consuming the bread as practiced in the circles of English high society see Fox, *Watching the English*, 318. On the ban on cutting fish, potatoes, dumplings, or boiled egg with a knife and on why using knife at the table was a taboo see Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 122–6; also Visser, *Rituals*, 183–9.

especially the large ones, in order to serve them this way. The halves were then broken by the eaters at the table.[203]

6. *Behavior at the Table*

a. Proper and Rude Behavior

In the world of the Arabic-Islamic culture of the Middle Ages, sitting at the common table implied sharing not only the tablecloth, but also bowls, plates, water jugs, and loaves of bread. As sharing food, drink, and tableware naturally involves a significant degree of intimacy and requires mutual acceptance, it also naturally touches on some of the sensitive areas of people's emotions. In the Arabic-Islamic world of the Middle Ages, these were regulated in accordance with the ancient Near Eastern wisdom which, verbalized by Jesus, son of Eleazar, read: "Recognize that your neighbor feels as you do, and keep in mind your own dislikes."[204] In practical terms, this meant that the Arabic-Islamic table manners compendia, while echoing the biblical/apocryphal rule, obliged one to manifest delicacy and understanding towards his co-eaters and, at the same time, to spare them aversion, embarrassment, or uneasiness that his behavior might have possibly caused.

The local standard of correctness required, for example, that one should not criticize the food he was offered: "If you were given the food you do not like," writes al-Aqfahsī, "do not find faults in it—just leave it and make excuses for not eating it."[205] Furthermore, one should not search the table so as to find the choicest cuts but eat what was closest to him.[206] If a piece

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[203] See Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230. Such loaves cut in half are pictured in one of the illustrations in al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*; see "Banquet scene," repr. in Ettinghausen, *Peinture*, 113. For Lane's description referring to similar practice as observed in the nineteenth-century Cairo, see Lane, *Manners*, 149 ("round cakes of bread (…), sometimes cut in the half, are placed around the tray").

[204] Sirach, 31:15; cf. above, chapter IV.1. "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," p. 398.

[205] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 53–4; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 223. The rule had a strong support in Muḥammad's teachings: "Were I invited to eat trotters I would accept, and were I given a leg [of lamb] I would accept;" quoted by Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 12 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 31).

[206] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 49, 51–2; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225. Moreover, one should not eat from the middle of the common bowl, nor from the top, but from its sides. Cf. similar recommendations given by Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178.

of food fell down, it was recommended to pick it up and eat.[207] The eating person should not, however, dispose freely the food—it was forbidden, for example, to feed it to cats or any persons other than oneself.[208] Furthermore, one should not take big mouthfuls, or take a mouthful before the previous one was swallowed. Furthermore, the food should be masticated well and with one's mouth shut. The latter recommendation, apart from being aimed at preventing the eater from making sounds while chewing, was also prompted by hygienic concerns or, more precisely, by the anxiety that one's saliva might get into food.[209] Actually, such a possibility, and its disgust-rousing nature, seems to be a very important consideration in the Arabic-Islamic culture of the table. For example, manners required that the eater did not put a bitten piece of food back in the bowl, as "that way his saliva might have dropped on it."[210] For the same reason one should not blow onto the food or onto the drink, or blow his nose or spit in the presence of other eaters.[211] And, while coughing, he should turn his face away from food or move away from it.[212] The motives behind various regulations relating to the consumption of fruits were similar. Thus, "if one ate a date or a plum, he should not mix kernels of what he ate with what was yet to be eaten. The same concerned pomegranates and all that had peel, as sugar cane and the like."[213]

[207] This, however, concerned the situation when the place was clean. If some food dropped onto the unclean surface, it was forbidden to eat it before washing it and removing the dirt. See al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 77; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225.

[208] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 62.

[209] Ibid., 60; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225. The use of the term "hygiene"—understood as conscious "practices conductive to health," which is hygiene's most popular designation—in reference to pre-modern cultures may, of course, be disputable. However, the term as used in the present study means, rather, practices resulting form certain suspicion, intuitive or acquired, that unclean things were harmful in some way. For discussion on polluting qualities of the saliva (particularly in India where it is considered extremely polluting) and other things as perceived in various cultures see Visser, *Rituals*, 300–9.

[210] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225, 226.

[211] Ibid., I, 230, 235; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 86–7; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 5 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 8); and Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178, also recommended not to blow on hot food but be patient and wait until it cools off. Abū Ḥanīfa an-Nuʿmān permitted to blow on food and drink only in case there were no other persons participating in the meal; an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 116 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 133).

[212] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 62.

[213] Thus, "if one ate a melon which was put on a plate in front of him, he should not mix the peels which remained of what he ate with what was still there to be eaten;" Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 63; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 222; cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 5 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 8–9); Bar Hebraeus recommended to put the kernels into a separate bowl; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 178.

At the medieval Cairene table, as in many historical and contemporary cultures of the world, it was considered extremely impolite to "stare at the co-eater in a persistent manner." This may embarrass the person observed, so much so that he even could "give up eating before satisfying his appetite."[214] In fact, it was prophet Muḥammad himself who forbade eating "if any (pair of) eyes were watching, even if they belonged only to a cat or a dog." But Muḥammad just verbalized what must have been a common rule. He, too, knew that "no creature was greedier than the eye."[215] The approach was not, however, limited to medieval Cairo, or to the Near East only—in the seventeenth century similar recommendation appeared in European table manners manuals: "It is impolite," Erasmus wrote, "to stare intently at one of the guests. It is even worse to look shiftily out of the corner of your eye at those on the same side of the table; and it is the worst possible form to turn your head right round to see what is happening at another table."[216]

It is actually impossible to define how widely the spirit of the culture of the table was understood and followed by the Cairenes. After all, the correct standard is always a sophisticated issue and following it was not simple at all, in Cairo or elsewhere. Obviously enough, there must have been individuals who either did not have a chance to comprehend it or did not care to do it. Others made mistakes simply because they were confused, as the recommendations phrased in a straightforward "one should do this and should not do that" manner did not cover all possible situations or nuances referring to the etiquette of eating. To reduce spreading of incorrect ways, the authors of table manners compendia resorted to stigmatizing and ridiculing the unmannerly actions. This was done by collecting and popularizing lists of examples of impolite forms practiced by unpolished banqueters. One of such lists, composed by certain *ẓarīf*, or a "man of refined taste," was quoted by al-Jazzār, the Cairene butcher-poet, in his table manners manual. Naming about twenty five examples of shameful behavior, the list included cases such as:

> The way of "the watcher" [*mutashāwif*], a man who is hungry long before the food is served, so much so that he sits as close to the door as possible, and expects that anybody entering the room brings in something to eat. The way of "the counter" [*ʿaddād*], a man who, upon seeing the plates, is entirely absorbed in watching them, and calculates them on his fingers, and

[214] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 60; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225. Cf. Ahsan, *Social Life*, 160.
[215] Sirach, 31:13.
[216] Quoted in Visser, *Rituals*, 328.

> points to those which are on the table, and forgets himself completely in this activity... The way of "the slurper" [*rashshāf*] who puts a mouthful into his mouth and sucks it and listens to the sound of swallowing it and does even not try to hide from the co-eaters that he takes pleasure in doing that... The way of "the shaker" [*naffāḍ*], a man who puts a mouthful into his mouth and shakes off his fingers over the plate... Or "the kneader" [*lattāt*], a man who kneads a morsel with his fingers and then puts it back in the food. Or "the swimmer" [*awwām*], a man who stretches his arms to the right and to the left in order to take what is on the plates. The way of "the divider" [*qassām*], a man who eats half of a mouthful and then takes the rest of it off his mouth and puts it back in the food. The way of "the toothpicker" [*mukhallil*], a man who uses his nails as a toothpick... And the way of "the sprayer" [*murashshish*], a man who disjoints a chicken in an inexperienced manner so that he spatters his neighbors with grease. Or the way of "the inspector" [*mufattish*], the one who examines meat with his fingers. Or the way of "the drier" [*munashshif*], the one who wipes the fat off his mustache with a morsel and then eats it. And the way of "the crumbler" [*mulabbib*], a man who throws bread crumbs into food... And the way of "the winged" [*mujannaḥ*], a man who pushes the co-eaters with his wings in order to make room for himself and not to let the food be too far from him. And the way of "the repeller" [*mughthī*], a man who during the meal constantly speaks about disgusting things. And the way of "the chess-player" [*shaṭranjī*], a man who takes up a plate and puts another in its place.[217]

Stigmatizing other people's weaknesses was, however, not everybody's favorite style. Having finished the long quotation, al-Jazzār felt uneasy, unable to understand how one could sit with people at the table, share food with them and, at the same time, scrutinize them in such a piercing and fault-finding way. "The one who showed up all these human shortcomings and presented them this way," he concluded, "surely was voracious himself."[218] In fact, al-Jazzār's approach must have been very similar to that of Erasmus who, some centuries later, could say that "the essence of good manners consists in freely pardoning the shortcomings of others although nowhere falling short yourself: in holding a companion no less dear because his standards are less exacting. For there are some who

[217] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fols. 13b–14a. The list above is not an unique inventory of the kind. Geert van Gelder traced a number of others in Arabic literature: the oldest list of designations related to eating behavior is that incorporated by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Kitāb al-Bukhalāʾ*; see van Gelder, "Arabic Banqueters," 87–92. Of the later authors, there is al-Ibshīhī, who incorporated al-Jazzār's list in his *Mustaṭraf*, and Badr ad-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 985/1577) whose work on table manners consists of nothing but a list of 81 terms related to bad manners, with explanations; see Badr ad-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Ādāb al-Muʾākala*, Damascus 1987, 17–53.

[218] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 14a.

compensate with other gifts for their roughness of manner."[219] For the time being, it is difficult to define whether the manner of fault-finding was indeed considered a social gaffe among the cultured urbanites of the medieval Near East, or whether al-Jazzār's attitude was an example of unique politeness and *delicatesse*. Be that as it may, such lists were published, be it for their educational values, be it for the maliciousness of some authors. Whatever the reason, they now provide an unusual insight not only into the daily behavior of the Arabic-Islamic banqueters, but also into their mentalities.

In this context, the Arabic-Islamic culture of the table had two aspects which, due to their disputable nature, deserve special attention. One of them referred to the question of gourmandism and obesity; the other one was related to the problem of conversation during the meal.

b. Eating One's Fill

It is popularly assumed that the custom of gluttony was spread in the ancient world by the Romans who brought it with them wherever they appeared. Whatever its relevance to the rest of the Roman Empire, this conviction is not true as far as Rome's eastern provinces are concerned. In the Near East, the practice of overeating was known long before the coming of the Romans in the 60s B.C.E. As early as around the year 200 B.C.E., Jesus, son of Eleazar of Jerusalem denounced it and recommended moderate eating: "Remember that gluttony is evil." "Behave at the table like a favored guest, and be not greedy, lest you be despised. Be the first to stop, as befits good manners; gorge not yourself, lest you give offence." "Does not a little suffice for a well-bred man?"[220] Gluttony, then, was not a Roman import. Provided that it had come from the western direction, it seems to have been brought to the Near East by the Greek rather than by the Roman elites. The same, by the way, refers to the idea of vomiting after overeating which was in fact considered disgusting among the Romans—again, contrary to popular belief.[221] Intriguingly, the latter practice was clearly accepted by at least some circles of the ancient Hebrew society. In the Book of Sirach, where overeating itself is criticized, the

[219] "Nor should what I have said be taken to imply that no one can be a good person without good manners," Erasmus added; quoted in Visser, *Rituals*, 67–8. On fault-finding as a social gaffe in the nineteenth-century West see Visser, *Rituals*, 270.

[220] Sirach, 31:12, and ff. Cf. Daniel-Rops, *Życie codzienne*, 189, 191. In ancient Egypt, obesity was regarded as objectionable, too; see Darby, *Food*, I, 60.

[221] Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 66–7.

banqueter is advised: "If perforce you have eaten too much, once you have emptied your stomach, you will have relief."[222]

The Arabic-Islamic world—as reflected in the table etiquette manuals—never mentioned or suggested the possibility that one may overeat and subsequently empty his stomach in order to relieve himself. Possibly, the austere Arab culture valued food too much to even consider such an option. As for gluttony, however, the Islamic recommendations did not differ from what the Book of Sirach had said: "one should be moderate in his eating; one does not eat too little, so as to not make people think he is shy, and he does not eat too much, so that they do not consider him greedy, hungry and avaricious."[223] "One should not eat more than one third of his stomach. It is hateful to eat more than that."[224] Not surprisingly, the Near Eastern Christians denounced gluttony, too, and so, most probably, did the Near Eastern Jews who, judging by the example of the Geniza people, "definitely were not food-oriented," and among whom "to be gluttonous or to have a belly was regarded as a disgrace."[225]

But gluttony, although generally held in contempt, was not entirely absent from the medieval Near East. In the fourth/tenth century *shaykh* al-Khalīl Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī referred to repletion (*shabʿ*), defining it as one of the first four innovative practices adopted by the Muslims,[226] which indicates that by the fourth/tenth century gourmandism and overeating were already an element of the culture of at least a part of the Arabic-Islamic society—however insignificant.[227] Nevertheless, such practices were never accepted uncritically. Unlike Western authors, Arab chroniclers never proudly reported on how much this or that ruler consumed on a given occasion. Rather, they mentioned how much he had spent on food or how much of it had been served at the banquet he had held.[228] What

[222] Sirach, 31:21.

[223] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 58; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*; cf. Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 177.

[224] Because "one third of one's stomach is for food, one third for water, and one third for breathing [i.e. digesting];" see al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 54, 56; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 223; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 6). The same, by the way, was recommended by Bar Hebraeus, who quoted the rule as an opinion of certain doctors; *Īthīqūn*, 177; also mentioned in Ibn Buṭlān's *Daʿwat al-Aṭibbāʾ*, 20.

[225] Goitein, "Mentality," 252; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 177.

[226] Beside the sieve, the table, and potash; quoted by Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 226 (*shaykh* al-Khalīl Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī was an author of *Kitāb al-Qūt* ("The Book of Food"); see also al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 3 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 4).

[227] This seems to be especially true for the prosperous leisurely class of the early Abbasid Baghdad and the courtly milieu of the caliphs; see Nasrallah, *Annals*, 30–1.

[228] See above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 3. "Chronicles and annalistic sources," pp. 44–5 and n. 82.

is important, this kind of information was not supposed to indicate how much the ruler was able to eat, but to show how rich and generous he was. As anywhere else, differences in quantities of food available to people of various social status characterized social inequality in the Arabic-Islamic world, too. Unlike in some other regions, though, the individual's significance did not go hand in hand with his waist size, for in this part of the world a sizeable belly was nothing to be proud of (and, due to the climate considerations, it was particularly bothersome to live with). This is not to say, of course, that obesity did not manifest material affluence or social position. But, unlike in other regions, it apparently did not generate respect or admiration.[229]

On the contrary—judging by the table manners manuals, a risk of being suspected of gluttony was for many people an effective incentive to practice moderate eating, as was a fear of being accused of greediness. To make their criticism of gourmandism more convincing, some of the authors of table manners manuals terrified their readers with a story of caliph Sulaymān Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, the famous food lover of the Umayyad dynasty. As the rumor had it, the caliph was so greedy, voracious, and impatient to eat that, when the food was served, he could hardly wait until it cooled. And, desperate to eat the hot pieces immediately but at the same time careful not to burn his hand, he used to wrap his fingers with the sleeves of his coat. The shameful epilogue of the story was that when many years later the Umayyads' treasures were discovered, there were, among other items found in the basket, Sulaymān's gilded garments the sleeves of which were stained with grease.[230] This story had, of course, a strong political, anti-Umayyad context; the warning message for the gluttons was nevertheless clear.

Apart from being regarded as objectionable for cultural reasons, gluttony, as unavoidably resulting in obesity, was denounced in the Near East as being detrimental for human health. "Distress and anguish and loss of sleep, and restless tossing for the glutton! Moderate eating ensures sound slumber and a clear mind next day on rising," the biblical/apocryphal

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[229] Such an attitude differed significantly from, for instance, that of the Romans; see Fernández-Armesto, *Thousand Tables*, 101–30. The Roman respect for obesity seems to contradict the thesis expressed by Margaret Visser: "When eating dinner is concerned, human beings all over the world call upon systems and codes which are designed to control appetite and maintain social awareness of others' needs.... Inhibition in every case is culturally induced, by precept, example, and social conditioning;" Visser, *Rituals*, 68.

[230] Al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 8b.

wisdom read.[231] Actually, what one could learn from al-Aqfahsī's manual must have been an unconscious paraphrase of the ancient suggestion: "If one eats a lot, he drinks a lot. A lot of drinking makes him sleep a lot. Sleeping a lot makes his body heavy. And heavy weight burdens his heart."[232] Moreover, overeating seems to have been traditionally perceived as a source of indigestion, which, in turn, was said to be "the origin of every illness."[233]

Intriguingly enough, neither the warnings referring to the reputation of a glutton nor the deterrence of the ruinous effects of overeating upon one's health were absolute or unconditional. Al-Aqfahsī, for example, allows one to eat to repletion if one ate the food of his own, with his family or his household, or if he knew that such behavior would please the host. In such situations, one could even "eat more than his fill."[234] Al-Aqfahsī's instruction may appear inconsistent in the context of the reservations discussed earlier. As a matter of fact, it corresponded with teachings of prophet Muḥammad who, while referring to voracious eating, was to say that cramming in the mouth two dates at a time was disallowed "while eating in company. But when a man is all alone, this restriction does not apply and he may do as he pleases."[235] It seems that gluttony was not disallowed when eating alone. One may be entitled to conclude that it was not the gluttony itself which was censured, but stuffing oneself, in front of others, with food which was bought with someone else's money. Or, to use the words of al-Ghazālī, "to over-eat when in company and eat little on one's own" was wrong.[236]

Although generally "greedy people are not attractive to others,"[237] and although the standards of culture generally denounce voracious ways, the temptation to eat for free is often stronger than the fear of losing one's reputation, regardless of time and place. It could not be different in medieval Cairo. The theory recommending moderate eating, even if generally followed by local cultured urbanites, could not be observed universally. In the Middle Ages, there must have been people similar to "certain grandees

[231] Sirach, 31:20, 21.
[232] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 56. Also Ibn Riḍwān cautions people against overeating and overindulgence; see Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 137.
[233] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 79.
[234] Ibid., 53–4.
[235] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 225; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 51–2; an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 118 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 134).
[236] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 8 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 19).
[237] Visser, *Rituals*, 284–5.

and *mollas*" whose violent appetites were so vividly described in 1599 by Muṣṭafā ʿAlī, a Turkish official from Gallipoli. He was shocked to see how those "grandees and *mollas*" of Cairo were one after the other "tucking up sleeves, taking off their mighty turbans, and getting unburdened. Then they rushed to the place where the dinner table was set up and fell upon the food. By God the Almighty, they devoured the food like wolves, tearing it away from each other! Some scoundrels finished off the table fighting over morsels like dogs."[238] Muṣṭafā ʿAlī was watching the scene aghast, as if this kind of behavior was unheard of in Turkey of those days. Be that as it may, publicly displayed voracity, even if by the end of the tenth/sixteenth century more typical for Cairo than for the Ottoman Constantinople, was not a norm in Cairo, either in the Middle Ages or in the post-medieval epoch. A warning included in one of the last sentences of al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War*, a narrative dating back to the decadent period of the Circassian Mamluk era, is meaningful: "and the hungry ate, but not to repletion; the food was swallowed, but everybody was modest in eating; and whoever ate greedily, was thrown out [from the banquet place] and cuffed."[239]

In the mid-seventeenth century it was the Egyptians' sobriety in eating, not their gluttony, that caught the attention of Antonius Gonzales: they ate little and were content with one or two dishes. Gonzales supposed, moreover, that it was "this moderation which characterized the quantity and variety of their meats and foods" that was, apart from the frequent use of the Nile water, the reason behind their longevity.[240] The moderation was also noticed some century later by Richard Pococke: "Both Turks and Egyptians are very frugal in their manner of living . . . the expense of the great men in their tables is but small, considering the number of attendants they have, in which they are very extravagant."[241] Edward Lane's observations were similar: in the mid-nineteenth century "the Egyptians [ate] very moderately, though quickly."[242]

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[238] *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 50.

[239] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), p. 121 of the Arabic text in Marín, "Sobre alimentación" (Engl. transl. in Finkel, "King Mutton," 17, reads: "those who hid victuals under their garments were, as soon as caught, slapped and ejected."). Finkel's translation was based, however, on a Damascene MS, while Marín's edition in "Sobre alimentación" includes MS of El Escorial; see above, pt. I, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," 57ff.

[240] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 185, 190.

[241] Pococke, *Description*, 193.

[242] Lane, *Manners*, 152. Cf. the account of certain Pedro, the Spanish prisoner and a physician of Sinān Pasha, grand admiral of Sulaymān the Magnificent, who happened to have a chance to observe the customs of the Turks in the eighteenth century: "Turks are

c. Conversation

Neither the Qur'an nor the Sunna of the Prophet contained explicit guidelines regarding the permissibility of conversation during the meal. In effect, the Arabic corpus related to table manners includes a fundamental inconsequence concerning the question. Some of the manuals, such as those composed by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq and Abū Ṭayyib al-Washshā,[243] authors who wrote for the courtiers of the early-Abbasid Baghdad, suggest to keep silent at the table, or at least to talk less. Al-Warrāq recommended this because "the kings of various foreign nations … and of the Persians … remained silent during their meals. They communicated only with gestures and directed their servants by nodding, so as not to make anything leave … their mouths and fall into the food."[244]

Interestingly, al-Warrāq is the only author to name Persians and foreigners as an example to follow.[245] The reasoning of others was exactly opposite. According to al-Ghazālī, for example, one should not remain silent at the table for the very reason that such was the custom of the Persians/foreigners (*ʿajam*).[246] Furthermore, al-Ghazālī recommended that the eaters "converse amicably and relate the stories of the pious on food and other subjects."[247] Ibn al-Ḥājj, like al-Ghazālī, considered silence over food a non-Islamic innovation and recommended talking at the table—if only to manifest his objection to what was foreign. At the same time, however, he warned against talking too much over the meal as this implied "distracting others from eating."[248] Al-Aqfahsī, too, recommended not to keep silent during the meal.[249]

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not overly fond of eating. I believe they eat to survive, and not because they derive a special pleasure from eating. When they grab a spoon, they assault their meals as if they are fleeing from a conflagration;" quoted in Şavkay, in "On Drinking and Eating," 37.

[243] Al-Washshā, *Muwashshā*, 113.

[244] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 336 (cf. Engl. transl. by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 508).

[245] For additional comments on the peculiarities of al-Warrāq's work see above, pt. I., "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 1. "Cookery books," pp. 25, 34–6; and pt. II, chapter IV.1. "Note on the Arabic-Islamic medieval texts related to the etiquette of eating," pp. 389, 394.

[246] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 6 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 13).

[247] Ibid., II, 6 (Engl. transl., 13).

[248] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 223. According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, "the master of the house should invite the conversation, for [making] a friendly atmosphere by talking is a firm element of a hospitable reception." One should not, however, "joke over the food, and this is for fear that he himself, or someone else, may swallow food the wrong way" and choke. However, Margaret Visser assumes that the "table manners commonly forbid what we call belly-laughs, partly because uproarious mirth is exposed by the baring of teeth;" Visser, *Rituals*, 92.

[249] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 64.

Due to the scarcity and inconsistency of clues, it is difficult to define in an unambiguous way which of the two suggested manners was followed at the medieval Cairene tables. Arnold von Harff who, during his stay in Egypt in the end of the fifteenth century, was given a chance to visit a number of Cairenes' homes, observed that "they sit on carpets . . ., eat and drink, play and talk with each other, all without any great noise."[250] Needless to say, one record is not enough to prove a regularity, particularly so that a century later *le signeur* de Villamont noted that "les Mores, Turcs, & tous Mahumetans" eat in great silence.[251] In this context, eating "without any great noise" and eating "in great silence" may make a fundamental difference. At the same time, both accounts may imply that the Cairenes simply followed the standard which did not encourage loud or violent conversation and which was so much different from the noisy Europeans, particularly when the food was washed down with alcohol.

Scrutinizing more ancient cultures for answers does not provide constructive definitions, either. It may, however, provide some interesting clues concerning the nature of recommendations as included in the Arabic savoir-vivre manuals. Judging from the Book of Sirach, the Hebrews did not refrain from talking during meals. The biblical/apocryphal limitations regarding table conversation refer, above all, to the question of precedence and manner: "Being older, you may talk; that is only your right, but temper your wisdom, not to disturb the singing . . . Young man, speak only when necessary, when they have asked you more than once . . . Be brief, but say much in those few words, be like the wise man, taciturn."[252] It should be taken into consideration, however, that the above words were most probably written in Palestine or Egypt.[253] Interestingly, the much later Babylonian Talmud (ca. 450 C.E.), composed in a very different environment and addressed to a different milieu, recommended a very different behavior, too: "When eating refrain from speaking, lest the windpipe open

[250] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 112.

[251] De Villamont, *Voyages*, 230; cf. the earlier-quoted account of Pedro, the Spanish prisoner in the eighteenth-century Istanbul: "They have the condemnable habit of never talking during the meal and never wasting their time at the table;" quoted in Şavkay, in "On Drinking and Eating," 37.

[252] Sirach, 32:3,7. Cf. Daniel-Rops, *Życie codzienne*, 185–91.

[253] The writer of the book who describes himself as Jesus (i.e. Jeshua), son of Eleazar, son of Sirach, of Jerusalem, was a sage living in Jerusalem. The language in which the text was originally composed was Hebrew, perhaps the Aramean dialect; the Greek translation was made in Egypt by the grandson of the author. Cf. Sirach, 50:27; and *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, 155.

before the gullet, and life be in danger."[254] The Jewish standard, like the Arab one, was twofold. The Babylonian manner, clearly inspired by Persian influences, urged maintaining silence at the table and was not very much different from what the Persian-inspired al-Warrāq and al-Washshā recommended. On the other hand, the Levantine-Egyptian norm, as represented in the text of Sirach, apparently did not consider the table talk a problem at all. As such, the latter approach was close to that of most of the Arab and Muslim authors who recommended that the eaters chat during the meal.

While the norm imposing silence at the table had obvious connections with the Persian *haute* culture, the other manner bore certain resemblance to the Greek ways. True, the ancient Greeks, very much like Persians, did not consider eating a good moment for entertainment. According to their standards, debate, like fun and music, belonged to after-dinner entertainment and should be separated from food.[255] But the Greeks, having definitely confined more serious disputes to the *symposion* time, did not eat in silence, either. Unlike in the Persian culture of the table, the Greek standards did not disallow a light conversation during the meal.[256] The Arabic-Islamic culture not only allowed one to talk at the table but, possibly to dissociate itself from the Persian/foreign ways, recommended this practice. Probably that was the way the Cairenes behaved during the meal: while avoiding fun, noise, and heated arguments, they generally did not refrain from quiet talk.

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[254] Talmud, Taanit 5b.

[255] Cf. al-Masʿūdī's record on the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn (198–218/813–833) who presided over an assembly of legists every Tuesday. The debate could start only after the learned guests of the caliph had eaten the dinner which they were served upon their arrival to the palace; see al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, III, 342. Al-Maʾmūn was not only half-Persian by birth but also a very active representative of Persian culture in the state he ruled.

[256] The Romans had *comissatio* that, as an after-dinner drinking bout, followed much the same rules as the *symposion*. Although the Romans tried to continue the elevated tradition of intellectual discussion, their conversations were not always of the same caliber as those of the Greek thinkers; see Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 87–97; Strong, *Feast*, 15–17; also below, pt. III, chapter VI.4. "Time and place for wine drinking," p. 499. In ancient Mesopotamia, on the other hand, the banquet was an occasion for debate and making far-reaching decisions; see Vanstiphout, "Banquet Scene," 11, 12.

C. *After the Meal*

1. *Licking the Vessel and Licking Fingers*

Some of the religiously educated authors recommended that the eater, having finished his meal, should lick the bowl in which the food was served. The recommendation, founded upon the Prophetic tradition,[257] was meant to promote modesty and reject haughtiness.[258] According to some authors, however, the rule did not apply to the situation when somebody ate his fill. If that was the case, one should either leave the emptied vessel until he was hungry and only then lick it, or give it to someone else to lick it.[259] Similar recommendations referred to one's food-stained fingers which, in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet, should be licked after the meal: this could be done either by the eater himself, or by someone who was allowed to do that.[260]

The actual approach of the Arabic-Islamic urbanites to the idea of maintaining the religiously ordained cleanliness by licking the bowl or fingers after the meal remains rather unclear. As for the Abbasid Baghdad, M.M. Ahsan assumed that the men of elegant taste (*ẓurafāʾ*) avoided such a behavior, while the ascetics (*zuhhād*) licked their fingers at the end of the meal.[261] Indeed, judging upon the words of the Abbasid courtly authors who suggested not to do it,[262] one may suppose that in more refined Baghdadi circles licking off the remains of food was considered quite vulgar. As for medieval Cairo, the scarcity of recorded clues does not permit one to state whether the recommendations related to licking the bowls and

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[257] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 78; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 224; also al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 6 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 10).

[258] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 78.

[259] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 224.

[260] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 65; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217, 222. In his *Daʿāʾim, qāḍī* an-Nuʿmān reports that the Prophet "used to lick his fingers, the sound of which was audible" and "used to lick the bowl and say 'The last part of the dish is the most blessed.'" The Fatimid *qāḍī*'s commentary was that "this was the code of manners of the saints (*awliyāʾ Allah*) to show humility and do honor to the provisions bestowed on them by Almighty God, and in direct contravention of the practice of tyrants;" see an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, 118 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 134). On the importance of the last piece of food in various cultures see Visser, *Rituals*, 284–5.

[261] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 161.

[262] Al-Washshā, *Muwashshā*, 192; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 337 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 509); Bar Hebraeus, too, recommends his Christian readers not to put their stained fingers into the mouth [in order to lick the hands after the meal]; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 179.

fingers were followed there at all.[263] Probably the only evidence concerning licking off the food is that by Frescobaldi who, having observed a group of people eating on the ground at a street corner, noted that "when they have soiled the mouth, they lick it with the tongue as dogs, which they are."[264] However, it is possible that some religiously minded people followed the practice, and that so did members of the lowest orders of the Cairene society.[265]

2. Ḥamdalla

As soon as the eater satisfied his appetite, he thanked God for the meal by pronouncing the so-called *ḥamdalla*, that is the words *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* ("praise be to God"). Unlike *basmalla*, or the words "in the name of God" that were clearly pronounced before the meal, *ḥamdalla* was to be whispered. In theory, the rationale behind such a recommendation was "not to create the situation that somebody pronounced *ḥamdalla* openly while some of the banqueters were still eating."[266] Whether the medieval Cairenes whispered *ḥamdalla* or pronounced it aloud, is difficult to say. In the nineteenth century the words *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* were still pronounced after the meal, but the recommendation to whisper them seems to have been disregarded. Moreover, the nineteenth-century banqueter, having finished his food and said "*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*," got up, "without waiting till the others had done."[267] Such a behavior was, however, not very much in accordance with the old standard of mannerly behavior. According to the medieval compendia, "one should, in case he has satisfied his own appetite, adjust his behavior to that of the rest of the company who have not

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263 The Egyptian authors of the secular background, such as al-Jazzār and al-Ibshīhī, do not discuss the question at all.

264 Frescobaldi, in Frescobaldi, Gucci and Sigoli, *Visit*, 49.

265 As for the modern times, Lane did not mention any habit of this kind practiced in the nineteenth-century Cairo. Visser, *Rituals*, 176, quotes B. Meakin who informs that "in Morocco in 1905, diners were allowed to lick their fingers but only in this order: fourth (little) finger, second, thumb, third, first."

266 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 235; also al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 67; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 4 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 7). Although Jean Coppin, while in Egypt in the mid-seventeenth century, observed that when the "Maures" (as represented by "un Merchand Maure" from Giza) finish eating, they leave the table without saying a word, or expressing any gratitude to God, or making any courtesies towards the guests; Coppin, *Voyages*, 125. On grace concluding the meal as recited in Jewish culture see Goitein, *Individual*, 35.

267 Lane, *Manners*, 150.

finished yet, as getting up before others makes them feel embarrassed."[268] At the same time, however, the guest was not supposed to sit too long after he had finished eating.[269] This suggestion seems to have corresponded to the biblical/apocryphal "When it is time to leave, tarry not; be off for home!"[270] All in all, what the Arabic-Islamic manuals recommended fits the universal conclusion proposed by Margaret Visser: "Deciding when to leave is often left up to the guests—but this does not mean that no rules apply. Guest must on no account leave too early, or stay too long . . . Living too early can cause a whole party to break up."[271]

3. *Washing Hands*

Strongly recommended and reinforced by the Prophetic tradition as it was, the idea of licking the food-stained fingers as means of caring for personal hygiene seems to have never turned into a popular habit in Cairo. The urbanites clearly preferred to clean their hands after the meal by washing them with water or, quite frequently, with rose-water and then used the occasion to sprinkle it on themselves.[272] The rules of the Arabic-Islamic savoir-vivre obligated the master of the house to take care that the guests were given a possibility to clean their hands as soon as the meal was over. According to these rules, the host was supposed to approach his guests with the ewer and personally pour water on their hands, starting "with the most respected of them and then circulating to his right,"[273] which suggests that the ritual was performed at the table. It is also possible, however, that in the Ayyubid or early Mamluk courts in Cairo there existed a way which the Abbasid-era authors suggested for the well-mannered courtiers of Baghdad, namely, that the guest, having finished eating, got

[268] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 64–5; Ibn al-Ḥājj, being careful about good mood of the banqueters, recommends that when the meal is over, the host does not remove the tray too fast so as to keep up the friendly atmosphere that has developed and not to spoil good time which the company is having. Besides, he says, "a new guest may still arrive;" Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 233.

[269] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 67.

[270] Sirach, 32:11.

[271] Visser, *Rituals*, 291–2.

[272] Although, according to Ibn al-Ḥājj, washing was obligatory only if the food one ate was fatty. "But if it was not fat, then there was no objection if one abandoned washing;" see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217; see also recommendations in al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 333 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 502–3); Ahsan, *Social Life*, 162. For after-dinner perfuming as practiced in various cultures see Visser, *Rituals*, 113, 117, 291.

[273] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 231.

up and washed his hands at some distance from the table. Interestingly, it was the latter way which was practiced in the nineteenth-century Cairo.[274]

Although by the Middle Ages the use of potash (*ushnān*) for washing hands was relatively wide spread across the Arabic-Islamic Near and Middle East, Ibn al-Ḥājj strongly opposed the practice:

> As far as potash is concerned, it depends if it is used in Egypt or elsewhere. Using it somewhere else than in Egypt doubtlessly constitutes an innovation, which is because meat of other countries have no stench in it—in places like the Hijaz, Iraq, or the Maghreb, or in other countries, it has a perfume-like smell. In Egypt, however, one has to clean his hands from the stench of [local] meat. Nevertheless, it is not necessary that one does the washing with potash. As a matter of fact, he should do it with something else, something which would let him act according to the Sunna. If, however, one was forced to use potash for washing, let him do it.[275]

Interestingly, in the medieval Arabic-Islamic world potash was used for washing not the only hands, but the mouth as well.[276] By the mid-nineteenth century the Cairenes washed their hands and mouth in the similar manner, though the potash was replaced by soap.[277] Hands, once washed, were generally wiped out with kerchiefs and towels, sometimes made of silk,[278] although in the mid-eighteenth century Pococke observed that one's garment could also be used for the purpose: "as table-linen is very rarely or never used by the Arabs, Egyptians, or Coptis, I have seen the latter, after washing their hands when they have eaten, wipe them with the great sleeves of their shirts."[279] From the religious point of view,

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274 See al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 333 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 505–6); Lane, *Manners*, 152.

275 Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 226; cf. al-Ghazālī, who considered potash "good because of its cleansing properties," and for whom the fact that in the old days people had wiped their hands with the hollows of their feet, and had not use potash, was not an argument against its usefulness; see al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 3 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 5); also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 333 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 505–6).

276 See al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, II, 6 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 12); also al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 333 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 505–6).

277 Lane, *Manners*, 152. Moreover, in the 1940's this was still practiced—the custom was employed in the Cairene street restaurants of non-European style, where after the meal every customer was offered a towel and green soap to wash his hands, mouth, and teeth; Rajkowski, *Nad Nilem*, 27.

278 See Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 232. In the seventeenth century Gonzales observed that "Chez les grands seigneurs on met—à la place des serviettes, qui ne sont pas en usage, ainsi que les nappes—à la disposition des assistants un grand linge fin, de coton ou de lin, qui fait le tour de la table et avec lequel tous les convives essuient mains et bouche. A cette fin les gens ordinaries utilisent de grands mouchoirs;" Gonzales, *Voyage*, 183.

279 Pococke, *Description*, 193.

however, it was more proper to wipe them with the hollows of one's own feet,[280] if these were clean, or with a piece of woolen cloth kept ready for that purpose, or with any harsh material which substituted for it—with the exception of what was forbidden by the Islamic law.[281] Very much like in Europe, the rules related to table manners forbade to wipe hands with bread or tablecloth (*simāṭ*).[282]

4. *Washing down the Food*

During the meal, vessels with water, in the form of simple pottery bottles kept on the floor or in the form of brass jugs held by servants,[283] were always at hand.[284] Nevertheless, Cairenes, probably very much like any other of their Near Eastern fellow countrymen, seem to have avoided drinking during the meal and preferred to wash the food down only after they had finished eating. During his stay in Egypt in the 1830s Edward Lane observed that "the Arabs drink little or no water during a meal, but generally take a large draught immediately after."[285] Whether the Cairenes of the Middle Ages behaved the same way is difficult to confirm, especially that the nineteenth-century practice as recorded by Lane was not quite consistent with medieval recommendations related to eating behavior.

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[280] Ibn al-Ḥājj refers to the way practiced by the Companions of the Prophet, who used to wipe off their hands with the hollows of their feet (*yatamandalūna bi-aqdāmihim*). According to Ibn al-Ḥājj, this clearly indicated that their hands were clean, because had there remained any trace of food on their hands, they would not wipe them off with their feet. This explanation, in turn, was to support Ibn al-Ḥājj's argument that licking hands after the meal was enough to make them clean; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217; cf. al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā*ʾ, II, 3 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 5).

[281] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 231.

[282] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 65; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 217. Regarding European usages, they varied according to the epoch. The Greeks, for example, wiped their hands, as well as knives and other implements, on bread which was then thrown to the dogs. Romans used either napkins or their slaves' hair. In medieval Europe, if one did not have a towel, he was supposed not to wipe them on his coat, but "let the air dry them." In the nineteenth century it was still advised that "knives should be wiped on the napkin, not on bread." See Visser, *Rituals*, 162, 166–8, 212; Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 74; Elias, *Civilizing Process*, 65.

[283] For the representations of such bottles see, for example, the sixteenth-century Turkish miniatures repr. in Jeanne Mouliérac, "Le Thème du banquet dans la céramique islamique," in *Banquets d'Orient*, 137; Bernus-Taylor, "Nourritures," 122; and the nineteenth-century engravings repr. in Lane, *Manners*, 154 (it must be kept in mind, though, that none of the pictures originates from medieval Cairo).

[284] According to Ibn al-Ḥājj "eating while there was no water around constituted and innovation, as it was contrary to the Sunna. [Moreover,] there was a danger that somebody may choke on a piece of food and could not find [water] to wash it down, thus possibly causing his own death;" Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 223.

[285] Lane, *Manners*, 152.

According to these, one was supposed not only to reduce drinking during the meal, but also to avoid drinking in a hurry or in one large gulp, which was generally considered detrimental to health.[286] Therefore, al-Aqfahsī and Ibn al-Ḥājj recommended to drink water gradually—according to the latter, the first [sip] was to be the smallest, the second bigger than the first, and the third to drink one's fill. Drinking in three draughts was said to have been "more efficient in quenching the thirst, lighter for the stomach and, moreover, more mannerly and more distinct from the way the greedy ones behave."[287]

As for the proper posture while drinking, there was no explicit or clear-cut recommendation regarding the question. Moreover, the opinions in this regard differed in a confusing way: according to some authors, it was forbidden to drink while standing;[288] according to others this was permitted.[289] Obviously enough, such regulations, inconsistent as they are, cannot be used to determine whether the Cairenes sat or stood while drinking. Judging upon the iconographical documentation, however, one may presume that as far as drinking during the meal was concerned or, rather, immediately after it, the posture most commonly practiced in the Near East was the sitting one.[290] As a matter of fact, it is difficult to imagine that it could be otherwise, or that the eaters, having finished their meal, got up in order to wash the food down.[291] At the same time, drinking while standing was most probably practiced in the market circumstances,

[286] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 86–7; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 234; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 5 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 9). Bar Hebraeus, too, suggests to limit drinking during the meal; see his *Īthīqūn*, 179; for comments regarding the correct and incorrect moments for drinking water see also *Kanz*, 12. For the custom of not drinking during a meal as practiced in India see Visser, *Rituals*, 304.

[287] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 234–5; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 86–7.

[288] Al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 80.

[289] Which was because of what was reported on ʿAlī Ibn Abī Ṭālib who, when a vessel with water was brought to him, drank from it while standing and, having finished, said: "There may be some of you who do not like to drink while standing, but I saw the Emissary of God (God bless him and grant him salvation) when he drank and he was standing;" see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 235; cf. al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 80.

[290] See, for example, al-Wāsiṭī's seventh/thirteenth-century illustration to *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī on which some of the banqueters are pictured drinking while sitting at the dinner "table" ("Banquet scene," repr. in Ettinghausen, *Peinture*, 113). See also the late-sixteenth-century Turkish miniatures representing formal banquets where servants keep jugs of water ready for the banqueters who are sitting at the "table" (in Mouliérac, "Thème," 137; Bernus-Taylor, "Nourritures," 122); and numerous representations (including those made on brass vessels) of Mamluks holding drinking cups or goblets while sitting.

[291] Particularly that Ibn al-Ḥājj insists that the host "should start serving water with the most respected of the guests and then circulate to his right," which would be hardly possible if the guests had already left the table; see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 235.

when one decided to quench his thirst with water taken from a street jug, or bought from one of the stands selling perfumed waters. As for the so-called *sabīl*s, or water-houses which in the late-Mamluk Cairo provided drinking water for free public use, they had a bench for their customers.[292] Drinking while reclining, explicitly denounced by the religiously educated authors,[293] seems to have been generally avoided.

For the time being, it is not possible to confirm whether any of these recommendations reflected a customary behavior of at least some of the medieval Cairenes. It is almost certain, however, that at least a number of them behaved in a manner quite different than any of the "canonical" ones mentioned above. If we are to believe Ibn al-Ḥājj, in Cairo of the early fourteenth century there were certain people who used to stand up "when the one whom they respected was drinking, and remained standing until he finished; after that they bowed to him and kissed their hands."[294] There were also people who stood up only when such a respected person finished drinking, after which they also bowed to him and kissed their hands. Still others "stood a half-standing or less, or more," and made a move towards the ground so as if they wanted to kiss it, and then they said "health" [*ṣiḥḥa*]. Some, however, did not do any of these things except that they said "health" to those who have finished drinking.[295] Actually, it is not clear at all whether Ibn al-Ḥājj's remarks referred to any particular social milieu or to the Egyptian/Cairene society en masse. Similarly, it is not clear whether the account discusses routine drinking practices relating to washing down the food after the meal, or a ritual way of drinking of some special beverages on certain occasions. The fact that most of the described practices imply the master-subordinate relation means that they could be valid for any social setting in which this kind of relation was involved. Ibn al-Ḥājj might have observed them, for example, among the Mamluk officials or among the local *ʿulamāʾ* but also among the middle- or upper middle-class participants of banquets he attended.

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[292] See below, pt. III, chapter V.1. "Water," p. 460.

[293] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 230; and al-Aqfahsī, who maintains that "to drink while reclining is hateful for the stomach;" al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 48.

[294] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 235; actually, sometimes the Egyptians still make the gesture today.

[295] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 235. In the mid-seventeenth century Jean Coppin also observed that the "Maures" say "Saah" when they drink; Coppin, *Voyages*, 124.

5. *Leaving*

When his guests finally decided to leave, the well-mannered medieval Cairene host was supposed to hand them their sandals and walk with them a little to see them off.[296] Such a courteous walk with the guest in order to bid him farewell seems to have been a long-cherished custom in the region. Dating back to at least biblical times, it was practiced by the Near Easterners independent of faith. As the official example had been set up by Abraham,[297] the local Jews, following the Patriarch's way, used to see their visitors off and accompany them as far as feasible,[298] and so did, apparently, the Near Eastern Christians.[299] The pre-Islamic Arabs of Mecca and Medina, also those of the Muḥammadan generation, must have known and practiced the ancient custom, too. Actually, the Arabic-Islamic recommendation regarding seeing off the guests derived directly from the advice of the Prophet who had recommended that "the guest be accompanied to the door of the house."[300] The medieval Egyptian chronicles include many records referring to the custom of "going out in order to see someone off" as being practiced by the state officials and nobles of the time. However, there is no reason why analogical behavior would not be practiced by middle-class Cairenes.[301]

Seen off by their host or not, not all the guests left his home empty-handed. For some of them a food banquet was an occasion to provide themselves with a take-away meal for free. Unlike in Rome, however, where there was nothing unusual to take extra food home in one's napkin,[302]

[296] "It was said"—writes Ibn al-Ḥājj—"there are three humiliating things for which the reward is high, and these are: to pour water on your brother's hands so that he can wash them; to bring him his shoes when he leaves; and to hold his beast so that he can mount it;" Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 236. Cf. Visser, *Rituals*, 294.

[297] Genesis, 18:16.

[298] Goitein, *Individual*, 34.

[299] Bar Hebraeus recommended that the host walked with his guest as far as outside of the house and only there thanked him for coming; Bar Hebraeus, *Īthīqūn*, 185.

[300] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, II, 16–17 (Engl. transl. in Johnson-Davies, *Al-Ghazālī*, 43).

[301] As mentioned earlier on, the visit itself could last for days and those of the guests who did not plan to go home could, having finished eating, either enjoy the after-dinner "carousal," with or without wine, or have a nap. From the medical point of view, however, the nap was not always recommended: true, "one could sleep after the lunch (*ghadāʾ*)" but after the dinner (*ʿashāʾ*) one "should walk at least 100 steps;" see al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 112–13.

[302] Bober, *Art*, 180. Similar custom was also practiced, for example, among the medieval Volga Bulgars; see Ibn Faḍlān, *Kitāb*, in *Źródła arabskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, vol. III (Wrocław: ZN im. Ossolińskich, WPAN 1985), 49 and 155, n. 245.

in Cairo taking out the food from a party was considered an unmannerly action, if not theft, and the authors of table manners manuals warned readers not to behave this way. Yet, there were "wicked people" who took "whatever they could take, and stole it, and hid it under [their garments] in order to take it out as soon as they returned home."[303]

[303] See Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 227; al-Jazzār, *Fawāʾid*, fol. 14a; al-Ibshīhī, *Mustaṭraf*, 186; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 68. According to al-Aqfahsī, the ban was not definite: if the guest knew it would please the host, he was allowed to take some food from the table and carry it home for his family; al-Aqfahsī, *Sharḥ*, 68. For a reference to the practice of hiding victuals under the garments see also Finkel's translation of al-Ḥajjār's *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*): "those who hid victuals under their garments were, as soon as caught, slapped and ejected;" "King Mutton," 17. Finkel's translation was based, however, on a Damascene MS; the MS of El Escorial as edited by Marín, in "Sobre alimentación," does not include such a fragment; cf. above, pt. I, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 7. "What the *Delectable War* is really about," pp. 57ff. Cf. Visser, *Rituals*, 293.

PART THREE

ON BEVERAGES

CHAPTER FIVE

NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

1. Water

Just as a Roman could not live without wine, so a Mongol used koumiss as the staple beverage. Predictably enough, the desert environment made its dwellers value water above all: for an Arab, simple water was, as the Prophet is alleged to have said, "the master of all drinks, in this world and in the hereafter."[1] Although originally uttered in the severe circumstances of the Arabian Peninsula's environment, the maxim, and the practice behind it, were valid for all of the Arabic-Islamic world, its urban centers included. In medieval Cairo, a city otherwise very fond of other beverages, water was *the* drink, too—though it is difficult to confirm explicitly whether this was a result of the diffusion of the idea behind the Prophet's words, or of the continuation of the ancient local way, or both.[2] In fact, it was only recently that water, for ages the only drink to accompany (or, more correctly, to follow) the Cairene meals, has made some room for tea and soft drinks on the table.

Since the Cairene soil, and thus its well water, was generally boraxine and saline and, as such, could not be used for drinking,[3] the Nile's flow remained the sole source of potable water for the city. Cairo's dependence on the Nile waters had a number of drawbacks, though. First, the river was separated from the city by a distance of about one kilometer.[4] A few medieval attempts to construct and use an aqueduct were in fact not meant to

[1] Quoted in al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 401; an-Nuʿmān, *Daʿāʾim*, II, 107 (Engl. transl. in Fyzee, *Compendium*, 130). The *ḥadīth*, not mentioned by any of the Sunni authorities, is quoted here as an indication of a highly possible Arab attitude.

[2] As van Ghistele put it, "mais en fait de boissons, on ne vend généralement que de l'eau;" van Ghistele, *Voyage*, 19.

[3] See Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 82–3, 107; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 173; *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 46 ("But the closer the well was to the Nile, the sweeter the well water was. It became more brackish the further one got away from the Nile."); Harant, *Voyage*, 154. See also MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 101–2, where it is said that generally the well water was used for washing and watering gardens.

[4] Raymond, *Cairo*, 245 (data for Ottoman Cairo).

provide the Cairenes with water,[5] while the Khalīj canal, in use for some three months after the summer rise of the Nile, facilitated access to drinking water for Cairo on a periodical basis only.

Generally, the drinking water for Cairo and al-Fusṭāṭ had to be transported directly from the Nile. The never-ending operation was performed by thousands of water carriers (*saqqāʾūn*) who, shuttling to and from the river, driving their donkeys and camels overloaded with waterskins (*rāwiya* of cowhide, *qirba* of goatskin), invariably aroused the curiosity of Western travelers.[6] Countless beasts rushing along the city streets, making noise with the bells tied around their necks, and splashing everything with water that poured out from overfilled skins, must have been a unique sight indeed. The water carriers might have been a nuisance, but they made life so much easier. Their services could probably be fully appreciated only when they failed to work—as, for instance, in the year 802/1399–1400 when the extremely high price of water, caused by the low Nile level and the resulting shortage of water, forced people to go to the river shores personally with their servants, slaves, and beasts of burden and to transport water themselves.[7]

The other problem with the Nile water was its hygienic condition. Collected on the eastern, Cairene shore of the river, or (when available) from the Khalīj canal, it was not only naturally turbid, but also contaminated by the sewage of al-Fusṭāṭ and partly by that of Cairo itself.[8] In effect, even if the water carriers drew it "far from the bank and the dirty places," far from an animal watering place and far from the outlet of the baths, as the

[5] The aqueduct of Aḥmad Ibn Ṭūlūn (the third/ninth century) runs from Birkat al-Ḥabash to ʿAyn aṣ-Ṣīra. The construction erected by Saladin (the sixth/twelfth century) was to carry drinking water from the Nile to the Citadel; the only noted use of the aqueduct under the Ayyubids, however, was that it supplied al-Malik al-Kāmil's recreational ponds at ar-Rumayla. The construction of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad (the eighth/fourteenth century), just like that of Saladin, was erected to provide drinking water directly to the Citadel, while the aqueduct constructed by sultan al-Ghūrī (the early tenth/sixteenth century) was to water his gardens covering the Hippodrome under the Citadel. See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 302 (the annal for 728/1328); MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 92–3; Raymond, *Cairo*, 90, 132, 180–1; *EI2*, IV, "Al-Ḳāhira" by J. Jomier.

[6] See André Raymond, "Les porteurs d'eau du Caire," *BIFAO* LVII (1958): 183–97. Rich people had their own camels or mules which carried water to their houses; see Wild, *Voyages*, 177.

[7] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 585. In 802/1399–1400 the Nile was so low that people could ride their beasts from Būlāq to Imbāba. For the summary of historical draughts in Egypt see also al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 27–49.

[8] MacKenzie, *Ayyubid Cairo*, 102.

rules of the art obliged them to do,[9] pure water was simply unavailable in Cairo—al-Fusṭāṭ area. The Cairenes employed a number of means to fight water pollution. The most popular of them consisted in using filter earthenware bottles as well as in adding various substances to the water—such as chalk, vinegar, almonds or pounded beans—in order to purify it and improve its taste.[10] The effects were apparently quite satisfactory, for the foreign visitors generally praised the Nile water, considering it "very good, healthy and sweet, sweeter than any other water," and good for digestion, too.[11]

The water that the water carriers brought from the Nile was delivered to homes, shops and workshops, where it was poured into large jars (*zīr*) made of red unvarnished earthenware. This kind of jar, resting "on a foot made very clumsily," had "commonly thirty-two inches in height, Paris measure. And it had ten inches in diameter."[12] The porous jars lowered the drinking water's temperature by few degrees which, however, was not low enough for everybody. The rulers of Egypt, from Fatimids to Mamluks, wanted it still cooler and, in order to quench their summer thirst with refrigerated water, ice/snow was imported from Syria to Cairo.[13] Although sources mention drinks of water cooled with crushed ice not only in the royal context,[14] it proved impossible to confirm whether this kind of

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[9] See, for example, ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 117 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 134); Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 25–6.

[10] See, for example, Norden, *Travels*, 52; Stochove, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 38–9; Raymond, "Porteurs," 185. For Ibn Riḍwan's comments on Nile water and suggestions regarding its cleaning, see Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 135–6.

[11] Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 45 ("the most agreeable of all the waters I have drunk until now") and 186; Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 6–7; also Stochove, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 39; *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 29–30; cf. Raymond, "Porteurs," 185. For the nineteenth century see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 412 ("Le people qui s'abreuve avec l'eau du Nil, sans égard pour les saisons et sans la filtrer, contracte, par suite, des principes fièvreux qui détériorent insensiblement sa constitution, puisque les eaux de fleuve se corrompent chaque année vers la fin d'avril."); Lane, *Manners*, 152, 322–3.

[12] Norden, *Travels*, 52. The description dates back to the mid-eighteenth century, but most probably was valid for the earlier centuries as well.

[13] *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 57; according to al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, XIV, 396, in the Mamluk times ice was stored in the royal *sharāb khāna* in the Citadel; see also above, pt. I, chapter II.7. "Fruits," p. 269.

[14] See, for example, a number of references to beverages served with ice as mentioned in al-Ghuzūlī's *Maṭāliʿ* (401, 402); also medical-style comments referring to water cooled with crushed ice in *Kanz*, 12–13. It should be kept in mind, however, that the fragment was either copied from the much earlier Iraqi *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, written by al-Warrāq (see p. 294; Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 450–1), or that both al-Warrāq and the author of *Kanz* copied it from yet another source.

extravagance was affordable for an average well-off Cairene, or it was a rarity available exclusively to the richest.

Be that as it may, a thirsty passer-by could buy a cup of water directly from peddling water carriers or shops; from the Mamluk times on, the so-called *sabīl*s, or water-houses, provided drinking water for free public use as charitable foundations.[15] For the customers with means, the main Bayn al-Qaṣrayn market offered a vast choice of more noble waters, "prepared with various kinds of flowers"—delicious, expensive and stored in beautifully decorated glass or tin bottles.[16] No need to add that among all the flower aromas, the one made of rose petals had no match.

2. Ashriba: Syrupy "Drinks"

In short, Nile water, usually cooled, sometimes perfumed, sometimes refrigerated, drunk to quench thirst and to follow the meal, was the basic beverage of the Cairenes, common for both the rich and the poor. As for drinks other than water, neither their composition nor their role or the social standing are as easily definable. Contemporary scholars, while admitting that various fruit-, vegetable-, and corn-based beverages were recommended by physicians, tend to suggest that these concoctions—their medicinal properties notwithstanding—were drunk in medieval Islamic cities on a routine basis, mostly in order to quench thirst with something more refined than plain (even if aromatized) water.[17] This, however, does not seem to be the whole truth about *ashriba* (sing. *sharāb*), as such beverages were called in Arabic sources. True, it is very likely that their agreeable taste encouraged the consumers to sip the *ashriba* for pleasure. In this sense they were drinks. But it is equally true that *ashriba* were also syrups in whose medicinal and tonic properties one believed and which, as the most palatable form of medicine, predominated in Arabic-Islamic

[15] For architectural and technical details see *EI2*, VIII, "Sabīl (2)" by D. Behrens-Abouseif; also, for example, Raymond, *Cairo*, 245–7.

[16] L'Africain, *Description*, 504. Also quoted in Wiet, *Cairo*, 103.

[17] Ahsan, *Social Life*, 111; *EI2*, VI, "Mashrūbāt" by J. Sadan; Goitein, *Daily Life*, 261. D. Waines admits that "from the culinary sources it is unclear as to the precise use these syrups were put" and suggests "they may have been drunk diluted and chilled or else used to flavor the stock in which certain vegetables were cooked, or as flavoring for salad dressings;" Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 26.

pharmacology.[18] Of syrupy consistency, they could, however, hardly be considered just a more refined substitute for water.

In the medieval Arabic-Islamic culinary manuals, the recipes for *ashriba* "drinks," placed before, after, or among the chapters devoted to food, are usually numerous and always extremely diverse, ranging from unsophisticated "lemonades" or "orangeades," as some *ashriba* are sometimes misleadingly styled,[19] to elaborate "near beers," as Charles Perry calls sparkling *fuqqāʿ*.[20] The simplest of these drinks constituted concoctions made of fruit juices—usually of lemon (*laymūn*), citron (*utrujj*) and, above all, quince (*safarjal*)—which, mixed with sugar or julep, were cooked until condensed to the consistency of syrup. Honey was rarely used, if at all, in these preparations. Apart from musk and rose-water with which they were often perfumed, and a few exceptions that needed saffron, vinegar, or some spices, these syrups were generally spice- and additives-free. This kind of *ashriba* seems to have no exact counterpart in older Arab non-Egyptian cookery books, such as Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq's *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, where fruit-based (apple, quince, pomegranate, plum, peach, unripe grapes) beverages are made of honey and more often than not contain spices.[21]

Apart from a number of health recommendations included in some of them, at first glance there is nothing particular in the recipes that would directly point to the medicinal character of these syrups.[22] There is, however, a number of hints that seem to allow for such a possibility. First, sugar, one of their two basic ingredients, was believed to posses healing properties.[23] Soothing, moistening, and cooling by nature, it was even

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[18] Leigh N. Chipman, Efraim Lev, "Syrups from the Apothecary's Shop: A Genizah Fragment Containing one of the Earliest Manuscripts of *Minhāj al-Dukkān*," *JSS* 51/1 (Spring 2006): 139. It is, by the way, from Arabic *sharāb* that the European syrup, *sirop*, *jarabe*, *sciroppo*, etc., derive.

[19] Sadan, "Mas͟hrūbāt."

[20] Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440.

[21] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 314–15 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 477–8); two of these recipes include medical recommendations.

[22] Almost all of the recipes for sugary *ashriba* as included in an anonymous Spanish-Maghrebian cookery book involve medical indications; the drinks they describe, however, are not fruity preparations, but are made of roses, aloeswood, sandal wood, violets, etc. See Lucie Bolens, "Le soleil pulvérisé sur les table andalouses du Moyen Age: viandes et sorbets (XIII siècle)," in Lucie Bolens, *L'Andalousie du quotidian au sacré, XIe–XIIIe siècles* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990, ix, 33–4; *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh fi-l-Andalus wa-l-Maghrib*, Spanish trans. in Ambrosio Huici Miranda, *Traduccion española de un manuscrito anónimo del siglo XIII sobre la cocina hispano-magribi* (Madrid, 1966), 10, 267–82.

[23] The belief in medicinal properties of sugar seems to have been common in the medieval Islamic Middle East: see, for example, Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 284, n. 148 (sugar was "used by al-Kindī for sore throat, in snuffs, dentifrices, several electuaries, in an eye

mocked by one Egyptian author as a nutrient consumed mostly by the sick, either as an ingredient of special dietetic non-meat dishes (*muzawwarāt*) or added to beverages meant to be drunk by "those stricken with fever, sore throat or indigestion."[24] In fact, to dispel any doubts regarding the medicinal use of sugary *ashriba* it would probably suffice to quote the words of Ibn al-Ḥājj, who observed, while discussing the question of sugar refineries (*maṭābikh*) and their production, that "the sick need food with sugar and *ashriba*."[25]

However, from the pharmacological point of view the fruity ingredient of *ashriba* was not less important: in Greek and post-Greek Islamic medicine, quinces, lemons, or citrons that were used to make the concoctions were known for their therapeutic and tonic properties, particularly beneficial for stomach troubles.[26] Although far-reaching analogies do not always prove true, one can hardly refrain from noticing that the high vitamin contents of citrus fruits, particularly when mixed with honey, is still believed to be particularly healthy and to work miracles even in highly developed countries.

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powder for removing cataracts, in a white powder, and in a sesame seed drug"); al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 308–9. The most interesting in this context is, however, a report by Ibn Taghrī Birdī who in his annal for 833/1429–30 (*Nujūm*, XIV, 340) mentions sugar as one the medications (beside purslane seeds and pear) whose prices rose when the plague broke out, as they were needed by the sick; interestingly, he also noticed this was despite the fact that few of the sick were cured by medicaments and that some of them died anyway. Al-Maqrīzī in his annal for 709/1309–10 (*Sulūk*, II/1, 55), and Ibn Iyās in his annal for 806/1403–4 (*Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 689), confirm that when during the epidemics the demand for medicaments grew, sugar was one of the goods whose price exceeded any acceptable level. Cf. Ibn Riḍwān, who mentioned sugar as one of "the cooling things," recommended to eat it when the air was excessively hot; see Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 139. See also Tsugitaka, "Sugar," 100–3; Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 130. For the medicinal uses of sugar in medieval Europe see Mintz, *Sweetness*, 79; Shepherd, *Pickled*, 168

[24] Al-Ḥajjār, *Delectable War* (*Al-Ḥarb al-Maʿshūq*), in Marín, "Sobre alimentación," 92 (Engl. transl. in Finkel, "King Mutton," II, 5); see also above, pt. I, chapter II.9.B. "Sweetening agents," p. 304; for more on *muzawwarāt* see Manuela Marín, David Waines, "Muzawwar," 303–16; also above, pt. I, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 261–2.

[25] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 153–4; on sugar *sharāb* see also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 627.

[26] For medical uses of quince see Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 282, n. 144; al-Kindī does not mention citron or lemon probably because in his time (the third/ninth century) the Arab green revolution was far from being over and the citrus fruits were not widespread yet. Cf. also Ibn Iyās who mentions, in the annal for 808/1405–6 (*Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 738; also 689), that during the epidemic the price of quince pulp grew significantly because it was in high demand by the sick. And al-Maqrīzī's report on the epidemics of 776/1374–5 (*Sulūk*, III/1, 236), where the chronicler stresses the extremely high prices of medicaments, chicken, quinces, pomegranates and melons. The therapeutic values of sour fruits, particularly lemon, are also mentioned by Ibn Ẓahīra, *Faḍāʾil*, 201.

The other element suggesting the therapeutic properties of fruit-and-sugar syrupy "drinks" is the fact that the appropriate recipes, though themselves generally devoid of direct medical recommendations, are placed in the cookery books in one chapter with formulae for various electuaries,[27] medicinal pastes,[28] and anti-nausea drugs (*adwiya al-qaraf*).[29] Moreover, the recipes for *ashriba* can also be found in pharmacological formularies,[30] where they are naturally intermingled with all possible medicaments needed by the sick, feeble or indisposed. The ready-made syrups could be purchased from pharmacies suited for the customers' social status. Members of the Royal Mamluk elite, when sick, had the *ashriba* and digestive pastes (*maʿājin*) prepared for them in the royal *sharāb khāna* in the Citadel.[31] Ordinary people purchased their *ashriba* from either the street *ʿaṭṭār*'s or *sharābī*'s shop. *ʿAṭṭār* was a herb and spice dealer and, at the same time, a professional pharmacist and healer, whose activities combined commerce with paramedicine. Preparing and selling *ashriba*-syrups was an obvious element of his work.[32]

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[27] Electuaries or *jawārishāt* were thick, syrupy preparations generally made of acid fruit juice or vinegar, sugar or honey, and a very rich composition of spices which usually included saffron, spikenard, aloeswood, nutmeg, Ceylon cinnamon, cardamom, and musk, to name but a few ingredients of an average combination. According to the medical standards of the time, *jawārishāt* could indeed make one's life easier. Depending on the ingredients, they helped digestion, improved the breath smell, perfumed the stomach and made it stronger, held back winds, gladdened the heart, eliminated the vapour, eliminated nausea, increased appetite for food, strengthened the nerves, and were beneficial for those with melancholic disposition; see, for example, appropriate recipes in *Kanz*, 131–46; al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 318–21 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 481–7); Ibn Riḍwān's prescriptions in Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 146–7.

[28] *Maʿājin* pastes were mixtures of honey or sugar, vinegar or acid fruit juice (quince, citrus fruit or tamarind), and a combination of spices (in which ginger, mastic, and cloves were most commonly included) that, thickened by cooking, were meant to be consumed after a fat meal in order to support food digestion; cf. appropriate recipes in *Kanz*, 131–46. Also al-Kindī, *Aqrābādhīn*, in Levey, *Medical Formulary*, for example prescriptions n. 1 (fol. 91b), 3 (fol. 92a), 4 (fol. 93a) and ff.

[29] Particularly *Kanz*, chapter "On electuaries, medicinal pastes and syrups that are taken before the meal or after it," 131–46; and *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʾat Taimūr 11, chapter "On digestive drinks," fols. 188–190 (also recipes misplaced recipes in fols. 178–179; Engl. transl. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440–2). In *Wuṣla*, syrups are included in the chapter "On *ashriba*," 503–11 (cf. Rodinson's remarks on the Cairo MS of *Wuṣla*, in Rodinson, "Studies," 123, n. 1).

[30] See, for example, recipes and prescriptions in Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 143–7; and in Chipman, Lev, "Syrups," 140–52. In the Spanish-Maghrebian "Manuscrito anonimo," syrups (*jarabes*), like *maʿājin* (*pastas*), electuaries (*yuwaris*) and medicinal powders (*sufūf*) have their own chapter (Miranda, *Traduccion*, 267–92).

[31] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, VIII, 224–5.

[32] On the *ʿaṭṭār*'s business see *EI2*, I, "ʿAṭṭār" by A. Dietrich; also above, part I, chapter II.9.E. "Spices, herbs, fragrances," p. 329, n. 968 and the references therein.

The *sharābī*'s enterprise had a lot in common with that of the *ʿaṭṭār*'s.[33] Literally a "maker of syrups,"[34] he was in fact a maker and seller of various kinds of mixtures prescribed by doctors according to pharmacological treatises. Countless kinds of *ashriba* which could be purchased in his shop were by no means just ordinary drinks.[35] In fact, all of them, from "sugar syrup" (*sharāb jullāb*) and "plain apple drink" (*sharāb at-tuffāḥ as-sādhij*) to "chicory drink" (*sharāb al-hindabāʾ*) and *sakanjabīn*,[36] were as medicinal as was the entire collection of digestives, pastes, electuaries, pills (*aqrāṣ*), powders, and drugs that the street *sharābī* made and sold.

Despite of the fact that recipes for some *ashriba*, or syrupy "drinks," were included in a number of medieval Egyptian cookery books, it seems these preparations were supposed to be appreciated, above all, for their therapeutic and tonic properties rather than just to satisfy one's dietary or taste predilections. True, these basic fruit syrups, usually lacking in any other pharmacological ingredients, were most probably considered nothing more than simple restoratives or digestives, and often taken as such. Nevertheless, as remedies/medicaments they cannot be studied here in detail. It would be probably interesting to note, however, that the apparently popular use of the above-mentioned mixtures may confirm a conclusion already drawn by S.D. Goitein, that the Cairenes relatively frequently suffered from stomach troubles.[37]

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[33] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 56–7 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 76–7); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 185–98; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 93–5; see also Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 143–50.

[34] See Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 76; Goitein has it "seller of potions;" Goitein, *Daily Life*, 261.

[35] Cf. the over seventy *ashriba* mentioned by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (*Maʿālim*, 185–97) which were, as the author stressed, only the best known ones and most popular.

[36] *Sakanjabīn* is usually translated as oxymel, or a medicinal drink or syrup compounded of vinegar and honey, sometimes with other ingredients (such as quince or pomegranate juice, celery, endive, and parsley water, etc.), generally used as an expectorant (according to Oxford and Webster dictionaries). Cf. Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 284, n. 149; *Kanz*, 132, n. 348; 136, n. 363; 137, n. 364); see also Goitein, *Daily Life*, 248, 261.

[37] The phenomenon was noticed by Goitein in reference to Geniza people; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 250. Goitein's observation was still valid in the eighteenth century, when a Western visitor noticed that "leur maladie habituelle est le mal d'estomac;" see Volney, *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1959), 141.

3. Fuqqāʿ and Aqsimā: Quasi-Alcoholic Drinks

It is not altogether clear whether the rich offer of the Cairene *sharābiyyūn* included such beverages as *fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā* as well, or whether these were available only from dealers specialized in making them.[38] The sources are rather vague about it, just as they are vague and inconsistent regarding the true nature of the two preparations which remain rather mysterious items of the Cairene medieval diet. The term *fuqqāʿ*, sometimes translated as "sparkling drink," sometimes, probably most aptly, as "near beer," at other times, somewhat misleadingly, as "une sorte de bière au miel," or simply as "beer" (and, consequently, *fuqqāʿī*, its maker, as "brewer"),[39] has in fact no good equivalent in European languages. The varying interpretations, imperfect as they all are, in a way reflect the vagueness of the Arabic concoction itself. The beverage behind the name *fuqqāʿ*, sometimes quite sophisticated and spicy, at other times plain and simple, sometimes—but not always—aged, was by no means one or uniform. With its ingredients and modes of preparation differing significantly depending on circumstances, any attempt to standardize *fuqqāʿ* is doomed to fail. Moreover, due to the ambiguity of historical records referring to it, making any systematic comments regarding the beverage does not appear too promising, either. However, since *fuqqāʿ* seems to have been relatively popular, both among the elites (although Mamluks did not fancy it) and common people, a discussion of the possible nature and role of the beverage is in order.

Lisān al-ʿArab, one the most popular medieval Arab dictionaries, defines *fuqqāʿ* as a "drink [*sharāb*] made of barley, and called this way

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[38] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa discusses these beverages in a separate section of the chapter on *sharābiyyūn*; see Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197–8. Cf. "*dukkān aqsimā*" mentioned by Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzha*, in Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh*, 60 of the Arabic text; and "*dakākīn al-fuqqāʿiyyīn*" in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 817 (the annal for 751/1350–51).

[39] "Sparkling drink" in Sadan, "Ma<u>sh</u>rūbāt;" "near beer" in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440; "une sorte de bière au miel" in Dreher, "Regard," 80 (apparently quoting H. Halm, *Treuhänder*, 25); "beer" in *EI2,* III, "Al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh" by M. Canard. Goitein mentions *fuqqāʿ* in the chapter on wine, calling it "the alcoholic honey" and "the honey sherbet;" see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 261. De Smet mentions it as "la bière appelée *fuqqāʿ* (préparée avec du miel);" see De Smet, "Interdictions," 54. Waines calls it "kind of barley beer called *fuqqaʿ*" the fermentation of which "was achieved by placing the contents in a skin container (*kir*) and leaving it for two days ready for drinking on the third;" Waines, *Caliph's Kitchen*, 26. Nasrallah calls it "alcohol-free beer;" see Nasrallah *Annals*, various places. *Fuqqāʿī* is translated as "brewer" in Sadan, "Ma<u>sh</u>rūbāt."

after froth that gathers on its top."[40] The cookery books, however, indicate that barley was rarely used for its preparation. According to the available recipes, *fuqqāʿ* was generally made of wheat bread loaves which, often when still hot, were soaked in water into which sugar and pomegranate juice were added. Left for a whole day, it was sieved in the evening, mixed with water and sugar, flavored with assorted spices, perfumed with musk and/or rose-water, and poured into earthenware *kīzān*-jugs (sing. *kūz*). The full jugs were to be left in a cool place for a day or two. Leaven was rarely added.[41]

The *fuqqāʿ* jugs, or *kīzān al-fuqqāʿ*, were not just ordinary jugs for storing drinking liquid. In the case of *fuqqāʿ*, the proper jugs were of particular importance for both the way the beverage was produced and the style in which it was consumed. In fact, these jugs have confused scholars for more than a century, and it was only recently (1992) that A. Ghouchani and C. Adle proved that the peculiar type of earthenware known as "aeolips" or "sphero-conical vessels" had once been used as, above all, a gourd for *fuqqāʿ*.[42] For the present study, however, their convincing argument is important not so much for its solving of one of *the* puzzles of the Islamic *Sachkultur* of the Middle Ages, but because it reveals the secrets behind the consumption of *fuqqāʿ* in the central and eastern part of the medieval Islamic world. It seems that the operation of drinking *fuqqāʿ* resembled drinking champagne from a previously shaken bottle. The bottle in this case was a small earthenware and generally unglazed jug, sphero-conical in shape, with a short neck and a small (ca. 14 millimeters in diameter) spout. Averaging 15 centimeters in height and 12 centimeters in diameter, it could hold ca. 220 cubic centimeters of liquid. Its thick walls (which

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[40] Ibn Manẓūr (end of the seventh/thirteenth century), *Lisān al-ʿArab*, VIII, 256; *Tāj al-ʿArūs* by al-Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī (the twelfth/eighteenth century) provides a similar definition of *fuqqāʿ*.

[41] See the recipes for *fuqqāʿ* in *Wuṣla*, 505–6; *Kanz*, 146–62; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 22b-23a; *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʾat Taimūr 11, fol. 179 (Engl. transl. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440–1). Majority of the recipes included in *Zahr* are—like most of the contents of this book—copies of those given in *Kanz*; the recipes included in *Wuṣla* are generally very similar to those in *Kanz*, and often the same; two recipes included in *Waṣf* clearly vary from those in the above-mentioned cookery books. Cf. also recipes for *fuqqāʿ* in al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 297–301 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 453–9).

[42] A. Ghouchani and C. Adle, "A Sphero-Conical Vessel as *Fuqqāʿa*, or a Gourd for 'Beer'," *Muqarnas* 9 (1992): 72–92. The authors admit, however, that their thesis does not exclude other uses of the vessel; Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 86–7; for a hypothesis regarding the use of the smaller vessels of this type see also Paulina B. Lewicka, *Šāfiʿ Ibn ʿAlī's Biography of the Mamluk Sultan Qalāwūn* (Warszawa: Dialog, 2000), 205–6, n. 15.

made the vessel quite heavy) were often embellished with patterns and molds.

It is still not quite clear where the concept of sealing a fermenting liquid in a portion-sized spherical vessel furnished with a tiny spout came from. The vessels were found in abundance in the areas stretching from Egypt to Afghanistan. The clues for their uses, however, can be found mostly in Persian sources. Nevertheless, there is no reason to suspect that certain Persian ways referring to the storage and consumption of *fuqqāʿ* varied significantly from those practiced in Iraq, Turkey, Syro-Palestine or Egypt, or the areas where the peculiar *fuqqāʿ* jugs were excavated. This would mean that in Cairo, as in Persia, the freshly prepared *fuqqāʿ* concoction was poured into little rounded jugs which, after their spout had been tightly sealed with a piece of leather tied around the small neck, were left for some time for the liquid to ferment.

According to ʿAli Akbar Dihkhudā, a Persian scholar of the nineteenth–twentieth centuries, "to drink the beverage, the skin covering the opening was pierced with a nail and the gaseous liquid was swallowed."[43] Ghouchani and Adle are even more precise: basing their conclusions on verses of Persian and Arabic poetry, they speak of two ways of consuming the jug's effervescent contents. Since these conclusions are not quite consistent, however, the final picture may remain a little bit unclear. Having noted that one way was "by sucking on the opening" of the vessel, Ghouchani and Adle maintain also that "one hardly needed to suck the *fuqqāʿ* out of its gourd" for, once the spout was pierced, "the drink would gush out by itself" as "the pressure inside enabled its easy escape."[44] But sucking on the opening and the drink's gushing out by itself do not have to be contradicting propositions. It seems that as long as the foamed liquid was gushing out of the jar, all one had to do was to swallow it. At some point, however, the pressure and the foam were over, and the remaining sparkling liquid *had* to be sucked out.[45]

Various sources written between the tenth and fifteenth centuries indicate that there were two basic kinds of *fuqqāʿ*. This is, in fact, one of very few elements that the respective records are consistent about. As for the

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[43] Quoted by Ghouchani, Adle, in "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 78.

[44] Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 81, 83.

[45] Ghouchani and Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 82, suggest that the gushing out of the *fuqqāʿ* denies the assertion that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to drink from the vessel's narrow opening (as maintained by H. Seyrig in "Flacons? Grenades? Éolipiles?," *Syria* 36 /1959/: 83).

definitions of the particular kinds of *fuqqāʿ*, the sources, presenting variations on the theme of Galenic doctrine, are far from being unanimous or clear. As such, they actually constitute a good example of how the original idea, transmitted from author to author, can be distorted with time. Thus, according to Isḥāq Ibn Sulaymān al-Isrāʾīlī, the philosopher and dietician of the ninth and tenth centuries, one kind of *fuqqāʿ* was made of barley flour, mint, rue, tarragon, citrus leaves, and pepper. This *fuqqāʿ*, being (according to Galenic criteria) "hot" and "dry" by its nature, as well as significantly putrid and producing bloats, was detrimental for the stomach and other organs. The other kind of *fuqqāʿ*, made of good (i.e. wheat) bread, celery, and wheat flour water or barley flour water, was generally less detrimental and more suitable for those with hot temperament (*maḥrūrūn*). To this kind, too, some particular spices could be added according to the drinker's particular needs.[46]

As for the reference to *fuqqāʿ* included in *Kanz*, a cookbook dating back to the Mamluk epoch, it is, apart from minor discrepancies, an almost exact copy of the fragments of the late tenth-century cookbook composed by Ibn Sayyār al-Warrāq in faraway Mesopotamia. It is not quite clear, however, if the author of *Kanz* quoted directly from al-Warrāq, or whether both authors quoted from yet another, third source. Anyway, both fragments look as if they constituted a significantly confused version of the above-presented comment which al-Isrāʾīlī wrote in the late ninth- or early tenth-century Egypt. Thus al-Warrāq and the anonymous author of *Kanz* inform the reader that "the *fuqqāʿ* made of barley flour is harmful for the nerves, causes headache and bloats, and is also diuretic. But it also reduces the adverse effects of fever, sooths the yellow bile and eliminates heartburn. As for the *fuqqāʿ* made of wheat *ḥuwwārī* bread into which mint, celery, tarragon, and rue were added, it is better than that made of barley flour ['and more suitable for consumption,' adds al-Warrāq]. And it is not good for those with hot temperament or for those with fever, in whatever condition they are."[47]

In other words, from the medical point of view, the cereal ingredient always mattered. The more one read about the details, however, the more confused one got, for the recommendations presented by different sources contradicted one another. While in al-Isrāʾīlī's version it is the

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[46] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 605; cf. also remarks on *fuqqāʿ* by Ibn Buṭlān as included in his *Taqwīm aṣ-Ṣiḥḥa*, in Elkhadem, *Le Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥa*, 107–8 and 215–16.

[47] Al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 297 (cf. Engl. transl. by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 453); *Kanz*, 147.

fuqqāʿ made of wheat bread (and celery) that is good for those with hot temperament, and the one made of barley flour is not suitable for them, in al-Warrāq's book and in *Kanz* it is the opposite: the beverage made of wheat bread (with celery added) is not good for those with hot temperament or for those with fever, while the one made of barley flour is good for them. The spicy ingredients (apart from celery) that in al-Isrāʾīlī's version go with *fuqqāʿ* made of barley flour, in *Kanz* and al-Warrāq's book are to be added to the *fuqqāʿ* made of wheat bread—which, in the end, makes the combination of spices unfavorable for those with hot temperament, as it is defined in all three versions.

To complicate things further, al-Ghuzūlī (the eighth/fourteenth-ninth/fifteenth centuries), a Syrian of Turkish Mamluk origin who visited Egypt a number of times,[48] provided yet another interpretation of the two kinds of *fuqqāʿ*. According to his recipes, the kind beneficial for those with hot temperament was made of good *ḥuwwārī* (wheat) bread as well as of barley, celery, mint, pomegranate juice, and white sugar, while the kind defined as detrimental for such individuals was to be prepared of honey (raisin water or date molasses could be used instead), ginger, pepper, cloves, musk, and rose-water.[49] The absence of flour/bread ingredient, a feature characteristic for the latter of al-Ghuzūlī's two formulae, seems rather atypical for *fuqqāʿ*. Indeed, almost all other recipes for the beverage call either for bread, or for other products made of grain such as flour or barley water. This particular feature can be also traced in the *ḥisba* manual written by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa (the mid-14th century). As the author instructs the market inspector,

> There are two kinds of *fuqqāʿ: khāṣṣ* and *kharjī*. *Khāṣṣ* is made of sugar, pomegranate seeds, spices [*al-afāwiya wa-ṭ-ṭīb*] and is called *aqsimā*. *Kharjī* is made of good molasses [*al-qaṭṭāra al-ʿāl*] ... So makers of *fuqqāʿ* should use one *ūqiya* [ca. 37.5 grams] of sugar and four *ūqiyas* of pomegranate seeds for every jug [*kūz*] of *fuqqāʿ khāṣṣ*, and spices as mentioned; the obligatory [measure] for *fuqqāʿ kharjī* is 8 and 1/3 of Egyptian *raṭls* [one *raṭl* equaled ca.

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[48] For biographical details and bibliographical data see above, "Survey of the Sources for the Study of the Medieval Cairene Food Culture," 6. "Works of fiction and *adab*," pp. 56–7.

[49] Al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 401. In short, al-Ghuzūlī's opinion of wheat bread *fuqqāʿ* as advisable for those with "hot temperament" is consistent with the recommendations provided by al-Isrāʾīlī, but contradicts the versions given in *Kanz* and in the manual written by al-Warrāq. Celery and mint which, according to al-Ghuzūlī, are to be included in the beverage meant for those with "hot temperament," in al-Warrāq's book and in *Kanz* appear as ingredients bad for them. Another of al-Ghuzūlī's *fuqqāʿ* beverages, supposedly bad for those with "hot temperament" and made of a non-sugar sweetener and spices, but apparently with no flour or bread added, has no parallel in other records.

> 450 grams] of molasses with spices and flavoring for every 100 jugs, as well as barley water. It is not used except when it is hot and is made by taking barley, cleaned and crushed, and cooking it on the fire, then cooling it and sieving, and adding molasses and spices and rue. It is good for the soul and supports food digestion.[50]

Due to the labyrinthine discrepancies between this version and the ones transmitted in the previously mentioned sources, there is no point in confronting Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's record with other records. Some remarks, however, are worth making. One is that Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, who was not only the author of the manual for *muḥtasibs*, or market inspectors, but also himself a Cairo market inspector's aide, was, presumably, closer to the urban daily medico-culinary practice than any other author. This, in turn, may mean that his was the most reliable description of what was really sold in the Cairene markets. Second, judging from what Ibn al-Ukhuwwa says, the main difference between the two market varieties of *fuqqāʿ* did not consist in wheat bread-barley opposition, but in including or not including a barley ingredient in the preparation, in including or not including pomegranate juice, and in the kind of sweetener added. In practical terms, this meant that *fuqqāʿ* called *khāṣṣ* and made of pomegranate seeds juice was sweetened with sugar, while *fuqqāʿ kharjī*,[51] made of barley water, was sweetened with molasses. The third important point contained in Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's instructions is that one of his two versions of *fuqqāʿ*, the one made of sugar, pomegranate seeds, and spices, and defined by him as *fuqqāʿ khāṣṣ*, was called *aqsimā*. Therefore the solution of the *fuqqāʿ* question is impossible without explaining what *aqsimā* was.

Aqsimā was almost as mysterious a drink, if only because some thirty *aqsimā* recipes contained in *Kanz* and other cookery books[52] seem to contradict what Ibn al-Ukhuwwa claims. Judging by these recipes, *aqsimā* was a beverage that never contained pomegranate juice, while *fuqqāʿ* was almost always based on it. According to these recipes, pomegranate juice

[50] Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197. For recipes for barley water see *Kanz*, 154–5, n. 411, 412. Cf. al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 605; also Yaʿqūb Ibn Isḥāq al-Isrāʾīlī's remarks on medical properties of barley water, in Oliver Kahl, *Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Isrāʾīlī's 'Treatise on the Errors of the Physicians in Damascus. A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text Together with an Annotated English Translation, Journal of Semitic Studies Suppl. 10'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22–4; 45–7.

[51] According to al-Ghuzūlī, *fuqqāʿ kharjī* was in Damascus called "*musaddab*," after wild rue (*sudāb barrī*) with which the *kīzān*-jugs were filled; al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 401–2.

[52] *Kanz*, 150–8; *Wuṣla*, 504, 509; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 22b-23a; *Waṣf*, MS Ṣināʾat Taimūr 11, fol. 179 (Engl. transl. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440).

was thus the clearest element differentiating the contents of the two beverages. Other differences were less definite and consisted, for example, in that quince and mastic, occasionally added to *fuqqāʿ*, were never added to *aqsimā*; that musk, never added to *aqsimā*, was quite often present in *fuqqāʿ*; that mint, always included in *aqsimā*, was added to *fuqqāʿ* only occasionally; and that *aqsimā* only occasionally contained cereal grain ingredient while *fuqqāʿ* was rarely made without it—which, by the way, agrees with what Ibn al-Ukhuwwa recorded. According to these recipes, *aqsimā*s were generally made by mixing pounded spices, which most often included ginger, cloves, spikenard (*sunbul*), and, above all, mint and rue (the last two were *de rigeur* in *aqsimā*) with sugared water. Into that composition lemon juice or vinegar could be added.

These records may appear as hampering rather than helping to determine what precisely the Cairenes stored in jugs called *kīzān al-fuqqāʿ*, and what exactly the *aqsimā* makers kept in another kind of earthenware vessels which, according to the required standard, should have been impregnated with cooked mixture of dough leaven, mint, lemon juice, water, and vinegar.[53] The records' discrepancies and inconsistencies, confusing as they are, allow, however, to draw one rather obvious and simple conclusion: one clear definition of either of the drinks is impossible. With their significantly diverse nature, *fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā* were apparently what one considered or knew as *fuqqāʿ* or *aqsimā*. Made of wheat bread, wheat flour, barley flour, crushed barley, or with no corn ingredient at all, fermented or not, aged or new, it was important that the beverage be sweet, often soured, spiced with assorted spices, and aromatized with musk and/or rose-water.

Due to the poor historical evidence, of the two beverages *aqsimā* may be easier to characterize in general terms. The very term, apparently absent from the pre-fourteenth-century Egyptian sources, seems to have been introduced into the Cairene vocabulary at certain point in the later Baḥrī Mamluk epoch to refer to some particular kind of *fuqqāʿ*. The fact that it was used somewhat arbitrarily and often interchangeably with *fuqqāʿ*, added to the terminological and ingrediential chaos.[54] The scanty

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[53] *Kanz*, 156, n. 418; 152–3, n. 407.

[54] To complicate things more, it can be added that al-Ghuzūlī considered *fuqqāʿ kharjī* a kind of *aqsimā* and that *aqsimā*, according to his description, was a beverage made of wheat flour cooked to thick *ʿaṣīda*-like consistency; al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 402. At the same time, from the recipes collected by the authors of *Wuṣla* and *Kanz* it comes out that there indeed existed beverages based on flour cooked to the thick consistency of *ʿaṣīda*.

information provided by medieval chronicles (as different from the earlier-discussed manuals) is ambiguous. On the one hand, one learns that the beverage styled *aqsimā sukkariyya*, or "sugar *aqsimā*," that was served at the Mamluk sultans' and officers' tables after the meal, was made of sugar and spices and was improved with cooled rose-water.[55] On the other hand, the chroniclers are quite clear that *aqsimā* was made of sugar and raisins. Ibn Taghrī Birdī speaks of 30 *qinṭārs*[56] of sugar and 30 *qinṭārs* of raisins of which *aqsimā* was made for Barqūq's party of 800/1398,[57] while Ibn Iyās mentions, in his annal for 918/1512–13, that due to the low level of the Nile many fruits, including raisins, became expensive, so much so that instead of raisins "they mixed date paste [*al-ʿujwa*] with *aqsimā*."[58]

Aqsimā probably was a sugar-sweetened drink, in one version with raisins and in another without them, seasoned with mint or rue, possibly also with ginger, spikenard, cloves, cardamom, or pepper, and perfumed with rose-water. It was meant to be drunk after the meal, presumably to help digestion.[59] The beverage might have been slightly soured either with lemon or vinegar (as the recipes in *Kanz* recommend), or with pomegranate juice (according to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa's manual). Some of the sources

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Non-sour, sweet, always with mint and rue, but also with some other spices/herbs (*aṭrāf aṭ-ṭīb*) added, they were, however, called *sūbya* or *shashsh*, and not *aqsimā* (cf. *Wuṣla*, 503–4; *Kanz*, 160–2; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 23a).

[55] Al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik*, 104–5; repeated by al-Maqrīzī, in *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 210; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 56. The drinking of *aqsimā sukkariyya* seems to have been independent from the custom of drinking "sugar" after the meal, which is said to have been introduced by sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 481 (the annal for 741/1340–41). The drink of "sugar" (sometimes "spicy sugar," or *sukkar ḥarīf*) and *aqsimā* were served in separate china bowls (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 299, 316). Cf. also, for example, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 276, 293, 379; III, 241; II, 50; I/2, 396; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IV, 9; XII, 81; XIV, 39 (where "a drink of dissolved sugar," or *al-mashrūb min sukkar al-mudhāb* is mentioned). See also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 346 (the annal for 732/1332); ibid., II/2, 491 (the annal for 740/1340); and ibid., III/2, 548 (the annal for 788/1386), where *mashrūb sukkar*, or "drink of sugar" is mentioned, served on the occasion of festive banquets. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, 28 (the annal for 757/1356–7) where the author reports that during the banquet held to celebrate the opening of the madrasa of amir Sarghatmish the drink of dissolved sugar "filled the pool." Cf. the observations by von Harff: "The heathen drink no wine but only water. But those who are wealthy and the great lords drink water which is flavored with sugar and costly spices;" von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102; and by de Villamont: "Those who are zealots and observe their law do not drink anything but water" but sometimes "they put sugar into it, or honey, to make it more delectable for drinking;" de Villamont, *Voyages*, 231.

[56] There were four kinds of *qinṭār* in medieval Egypt, equaling from 45 kilograms to 81,25 kilograms. I am not able to define which of them the chronicler means. See Hinz, *Masse*, 24–5.

[57] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 81; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501.

[58] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 274.

[59] As a remark in *Kanz*, 157, n. 420 indicates.

seem to indicate that it might not have been soured at all, particularly as served on the Mamluk tables.[60]

So much for *aqsimā*. As already suggested, the longer and better documented story of *fuqqāʿ* defies any brief summary, particularly so that the records are too confusing to allow for an unequivocal depiction of the beverage. Besides the sources discussed hitherto, there are also others which add yet another aspect to the issue at hand: the presumed fuddling properties of *fuqqāʿ*. The general belief in these properties, as shared by contemporary scholars, was inspired, to a significant degree, by various medieval reports on *fuqqāʿ* being prohibited (in 395/1005) by the caliph al-Ḥākim. This belief agrees with a common conviction that the term *fuqqāʿ* as used in medieval texts designated an intoxicating drink today known as beer.[61]

As a matter of fact, it is impossible to define what exactly al-Ḥākim knew as *fuqqāʿ* and whether the *fuqqāʿ* he prohibited was alcoholic indeed. Moreover, it is not even certain whether he considered it as such and whether it was the possibly intoxicating nature of *fuqqāʿ* that made al-Ḥākim prohibit people to drink it. The only existing eyewitness account reporting on the caliph's ban on *fuqqāʿ* in 395/1005 does not seem to support such a thesis. Judging by this account, noted down by a Christian historian Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī during the reign of al-Ḥākim, there is no obvious reason to relate the prohibition of *fuqqāʿ* issued by the caliph[62] to his prohibitions of wine (*nabīdh*) or of goods that could be used for wine production, such as honey, raisins and grapes. Poured out, burnt, or otherwise destroyed, these articles were prohibited out of religious motivations—similarly to houses of ill-fame that al-Ḥākim suppressed or to the sale of slave singing-girls that he forbade to practice.[63]

True, al-Ḥākim might have been informed that—as ar-Rāzī put it many decades earlier—*fuqqāʿ* "goes to the head," particularly that medieval experts in Islamic law apparently had difficulties with the unambiguous classification of the drink.[64] It is much more probable, however,

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[60] It is not impossible that some version of the raisin *aqsimā*, if "aged," was also appreciated for its slightly inebriating properties.

[61] Apart from the above quoted references referring to *fuqqāʿ* as to beer, (n. 39), see also Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 78, 86, where the authors, conscious of the imprecise nature of the term, nevertheless agree to call *fuqqāʿ* "beer" and tend to suggest that the beverage might have been inebriating.

[62] Al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 256–7; also al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ*, II, 77, 81, 90, 91.

[63] See below, chapter VI.5. "Prohibition," pp. 515–16.

[64] Sadan, "Ma<u>sh</u>rūbāt." When asked about *fuqqāʿ*, Malik Ibn Anas was to say: "If it does not intoxicate then there is no problem;" *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, "Al-Ashriba," 54.

that the caliph's ban on *fuqqāʿ*, just like his unique ban on Jew's mallow (*mulūkhiyya*), rocket (*jarjīr*), lupine (*turmus*), river mussels (*ad-dallīnas*), fish with no scales, and a dish called *mutawakkiliyya*, whose prohibition Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī mentions together with the prohibition of *fuqqāʿ*,[65] had little to do with the caliph's concern for Islamic morals.[66] Another of al-Anṭākī's records referring to *fuqqāʿ* seems to confirm that the beverage, rather than having been related to alcohol, prostitution, and the like, shared the fate of certain foodstuffs which annoyed al-Ḥākim for philosophical, political, doctrinal, or personal reasons. The record, discussing the events of 397/1006 (or over a year after the prohibition in question was issued), states that during the period of Abū Rakwa's revolt, "people of Miṣr resumed the sale of *fuqqāʿ*, of Jew's mallow, of river mussels, and of fish with no scales, and of all that had been prohibited in an unprecedented way."[67] In fact, the possible—or alleged—intoxicant nature of the Egyptian *fuqqāʿ* was indicated for the first time[68] as late as almost thirty years after the death of al-Ḥākim, when Nāṣer-e Khosraw referred in his travel account to the old bans of the caliph: "and [in the days of al-Ḥākim] they did not drink *fuqqāʿ*, for it was said to be intoxicant, and thus forbidden."[69]

Whatever the true nature of the *fuqqāʿ* which al-Ḥākim banned, there is in fact not much to indicate, apart from its alcoholic connotation suggested by Nāṣer-e Khosraw, that *fuqqāʿ* could actually designate "beer" in medieval Egypt. Particularly that beer in Egypt was commonly and explicitly known as *mizr*.[70] Moreover, *fuqqāʿ*, if produced according to recipes for the beverage included in the cookery books, or according to the

[65] The later chroniclers and history compilers report on the event in the same style; see, for example, Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Abī Bakr as-Suyūṭī, *Tārīkh al-Khulafāʾ* (Miṣr: Maṭbaʿat as-Saʿāda, 1952), I, 414; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, V, 293; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IV, 178.

[66] See also al-Maqrīzī, *Ittiʿāẓ*, II, 53, 81, 86, 90, 91, 103. On al-Ḥākim's alimentary bans see also above, part I, chapter II.6. "Vegetables and legumes," pp. 250–1, and the references therein.

[67] Al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 268, 269.

[68] This refers, of course, only to sources available today.

[69] *Safar-nāma*, Persian text in *Sefer Nameh, Relation du voyage de Nassiri Khosrau*, ed. Charles Schefer (Paris: Publications de l'Ecole des Langues Orientales Vivantes, 1881), 44; in English translation of the fragment as included in *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 46, *fuqqāʿ* is translated as "beer;" cf. the translation by Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 78, which reads: " 'because it was said to be altered' (i.e. fermented)."

[70] De Smet sets "la bière appelée *fuqqāʿ*" prepared with honey against "celle appelée *mizr*" which was based on ferment; De Smet, "Interdictions," 54. For more details on beer see below, chapter VI.2. "Beers of Egyptians," pp. 487ff.

recommendations provided in the market inspector's manual, could by no means be beer. Since grain starch itself does not ferment effectively unless first split into fermentable sugars, macerating flour—or bread pieces—in water for some time is not enough to make a true alcoholic drink. To make beer, grain should be first subjected to malting, i.e. soaked in water and allowed to germinate for several days in order to develop diastase, an enzyme necessary to convert starch into maltose. None of the above-mentioned sources provides a hint that such a process might have indeed been a part of the *fuqqāʿ*-making operations. Another possibility would have been, perhaps, to use bread or flour made of malted grain, but nothing suggests applying such a procedure, either.[71]

According to J. Sadan, in the case of *fuqqāʿ* "the sense of 'beer' is clearly evident when the [Arabic] text describes the fermentation (*yakhmar*, *yathūr*) of this drink."[72] In fact, the discussed fermentation refers to an operation of leaving the concoction in earthenware vessels (*kūz*) for a day or two.[73] The composition of the contents and the time during which it was exposed to fermentation allowed for the production of CO_2, or the much appreciated refreshing bubbles and foam, as well as trace quantities of ethanol. This implies that most, if not all, of the recipes for *fuqqāʿ*—and some of those for *aqsimā* as well—are instructions on how to prepare a beverage quite similar in character to what is today known as kvass, for centuries popular in Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine, and some other Eastern European countries. Made by the natural fermentation of simple sugars contained in whatever vegetable product is available, particularly fruits, grain or, in its most popular version, stale rye bread, kvass is said to be (depending on the source) either non-alcoholic or mildly alcoholic. The strongest of what is made in Russia today can only be around 2.2 percent, but what was made in Cairo must have been closer to the lower limit of alcohol contents, i.e. 0.7 percent, if it was alcoholic at all. The level of alcohol must have been low enough for the zealous Ayyubid or Mamluk rulers who never tried to make a stand against the *fuqqāʿ* consumption.

As for the social status of *fuqqāʿ* in medieval Egypt, the evidence is too fragmentary to allow for a precise definition. Aṭ-Ṭabarī's record of the unrest that broke out in Samarra in 248/862 rather clearly suggests *fuqqāʿ*

[71] Cf. below, chapter VI.2. "Beers of Egyptians," pp. 487, 492–3.
[72] Sadan, "Mas͟hrūbāt."
[73] See, for example, *Kanz*, 148, n. 395: "*wa yukhammar wa yustaʿmal*," or "and it is fermented and ready to use;" and ibid., 149, n. 397: "*thumma yukhammar yawman wa laylatan*," or "then it ferments for a day and night."

to be the drink of the poor. True, the account listing the *fuqqāʿ* drinkers (*aṣḥāb al-fuqqāʿ*) among the lowest orders of the pre-tenth-century Samarra/Iraq population[74] does not have to be necessarily applicable for the post-tenth-century Cairo/Egypt. Nevertheless, the way *fuqqāʿ* is mentioned by Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī allows for a guess that also in Egypt it might have been a drink of the populace rather than of the elites. But even if *fuqqāʿ* was the cheap (albeit presumably alcohol-free) wine of the Egyptians before and during at least part of the Fatimid epoch, it apparently was not exclusively so in the centuries that followed. *Fuqqāʿ*, even a second-rate one, must have been something more than that in Egypt. After all, neither the sophisticated recipes nor the various authors' recommendations to customize *fuqqāʿ* to its drinker's nature and his actual disposition—as profiled according to the Galenic criteria of humoral pathology—could not be addressed to the local miserable tipplers.

In fact, it is not altogether clear how far such theoretical considerations influenced people's actual choices, or whether they were considered in daily life at all. Nevertheless, the pharmacological context of complex indications and contraindications included in various records dealing with the two beverages may provide a plausible ground for making a hypothesis regarding the daily practice. It is that—contrary to what is sometimes suggested[75]—neither *fuqqāʿ* nor *aqsimā* were just ordinary drinks, drunk with no particular reason other than to quench thirst or to drink for the drinking's sake and, occasionally, to enjoy the effects of trace quantities of alcohol possibly contained in them.

In fact, there is a number of indications confirming that these beverages, believed to be beneficial for some, and detrimental for others, were not supposed to be neutral for human health. On the contrary: they were recommended to produce some remedial or at least tonic effects, mostly of the digestive nature.[76] It is also one of the properties for which kvass

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[74] Apart from *aṣḥāb al-fuqqāʿ*, also *aṣḥāb al-ḥammāmāt*, *ghulmān al-bāqillā*, *ghawghāʾ*, etc. are mentioned among those who joined riots which followed al-Mustaʿīn's choice for the caliphate in 248/862; see aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh,* IX, 257–8; cf. also Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil,* VI, 150. Ghouchani and Adle confirm the cheapness of the beverage in medieval Persia; see Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 83.

[75] See Dreher, "Regard," 64, 79–80; Sadan, "Mas͟hrūbāt."

[76] In *Waṣf,* a cookery book dating back to the Mamluk era, both *fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā* (the latter translated by Perry as "oxymel") are included in the chapter on digestives (*ḥāḍimāt*); *Waṣf,* MS Ṣināʿat Taimūr 11, fols. 178–179, 188–190 (Engl. transl. in Perry, "Familiar Foods," 440–2); also in *Kanz* it is stressed that *aqsimā* is good for digestion (157, n. 420). See also recipes for pomegranate beverage and for sugar and lemon beverage given in *Wuṣla,* 507 and in *Kanz,* 167–8, nn. 450, 451, where it is stressed that these concoctions are better and

has been appreciated for ages throughout Russia.[77] According to some opinions, these beneficial effects of *fuqqāʿ* appeared only if it was drunk before the meal. "For when *fuqqāʿ*s are drunk after the meal, the only benefit coming from them are short burps that please the man when they go out."[78] *Aqsimā*, on the other hand, although by some classified as "kind of *fuqqāʿ*,"[79] was served after the meal—at least by the Mamluk table standards.

Be that as it may, the proper sequence, whatever it really was, must have mattered. But the two beverages' complex formulae and, particularly, the medicinal qualities of the ingredients they called for, mattered at least as much. Of these, the most conspicuous is probably the use of rue (*sadhāb*), the plant popularly believed to "gladden the soul and help digestion"[80] and included in almost all known recipes for *fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*. Other characteristic features are the preference for nourishing wheat over much less appreciated barley[81] and an almost absolute exclusion of heating and drying honey to the advantage of soothing and therapeutic sugar.[82] The

more beneficial than *fuqqāʿ*. Cf. also Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197, though the remark may refer to the beverage itself as well as to rue, which was one of its ingredients.

77 Throughout Russia kvass has been also considered an excellent thirst quencher and an antidote for hangover.

78 Al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 401. Cf. a recipe in Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fols. 22b–23a, in which *fuqqāʿ* is recommended to be drunk with meals.

79 Al-Ghuzūlī maintained that *fuqqāʿ kharjī* was a kind of *aqsimā* (al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 402) while according to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa *fuqqāʿ khāṣṣ* was a kind of *aqsimā* (Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197). In *Kanz*, recipes for *aqsimā* drinks are place in the chapter "On how to make *fuqqāʿ*" (*Kanz*, 146–62).

80 Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 197, though the remark may well refer to *fuqqāʿ* itself. Interestingly, rue was probably never added to electuaries (*jawarīshāt*) or digestive pastes (*maʿājin*), and was only occasionally added to food; for more on rue see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 471–2; Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 281, n. 140.

81 Though barley, generally used as fodder for animals, had its benefits, too; cf. al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 216. According to the Galenic criteria, wheat was hot and moderate in moisture and dryness, while barley was cold, and dry in the first degree, and less nourishing than wheat; see an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XI, 14.

82 The sugar-honey opposition was probably most clearly defined by al-Isrāʾīlī: "the difference between the sweetness of sugar and that of honey is that the sweetness of honey is heating and drying, while in the sweetness of sugar there is soothing and moistening, and that is why sugar causes less thirst and is less detrimental to the stomach (al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 309). Joshua Finkel who maintains that honey possessed healing powers while sugar was "a much more staple food" does not explain how he arrived at this conclusion; see Finkel, "King Mutton," I, 137.

Indeed, honey, just like any other edible, possessed its Galenic qualities. As such, it could not be neutral for human health and was recommended to counteract certain ailments (cf., i.e., al-Warrāq's recipes for honey syrups, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 314–15 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 477–8). For more on honey and sugar in Graeco-Islamic medicine

fact that pomegranate juice was for some reasons added to one kind of these beverages (to *aqsimā* according to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa and to *fuqqāʿ* according to *Kanz*) and avoided in the other (in *fuqqāʿ* according to Ibn al-Ukhuwwa and in *aqsimā* according to *Kanz*) must have had its medical justification, too. After all, pomegranate was defined as being "more a medication than a food item."[83]

It seems rather certain, then, that both *aqsimā* and *fuqqāʿ* were generally considered to be tonic and digestive potions.[84] Defining which of their versions fitted which human constitution, what composition was advantageous for which temperament, what exactly was suitable against what malady, or in what circumstances the beverages were drunk before or after the meal, exceeds the scope of the present work—if it is possible at all. It is also difficult to say how widespread was the consciousness of the pharmacological qualities of *fuqqāʿ* or *aqsimā*. These questions must have been a matter of convention dependent on the standard prevalent in a particular location or neighborhood and in a particular social environment. Yet the standard was not permanent, even though Egyptians generally remained conservative and faithful to their traditional ways. Local habits and beliefs sometimes succumbed to changing circumstances.

Four factors seem to have affected the later history of the non-alcoholic beverages in Cairo. These included the decline of the supremacy of the Galenic humoral doctrine and of the Greek medicine in general; the waves of plague epidemics which, starting in the mid-fourteenth century, kept depopulating the Middle and the Near East; and the Ottoman occupation of Cairo which, from the early sixteenth century on, offered the Cairenes new styles and standards. Irrelevant as this may sound, another factor could have been related to the ban on alcoholic beverages or, more

see Marín and Waines, "Balanced Way," 128–30 and the fragments of a treaty by Ibn Saʿīd at-Tamīmī translated therein.

In fact, one of the otherwise rare indications suggesting that honey might have equaled sugar for its healing properties is a rather debatable, if not suspect, remark noted down by al-Maqrīzī. According to this author, the increased incidence of high fever in 695/1295–6 caused soaring of the prices of "sugar, honey, and other products needed by the sick;" al-Maqrīzī, *Ighātha*, in Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 44. On pharmacological use of honey see Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 304, n. 200. Cf. Chipman, Lev, "Syrups," 158, where the main pharmacological use of honey is defined as that of "base material for compound medicines" (and p. 160 where the main use of sugar is defined as that of "sweetener").

[83] Al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 295; for medical qualities of pomegranate see ibid., 295–8.

[84] Though some varieties of *fuqqāʿ* might have been also helpful in fighting intoxication or in increasing the appetite; cf. al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 402.

precisely, to the increased determination and seriousness which characterized the process of its implementation from the fourteenth century on. The question of the prohibition, discussed in detail in the following chapter, is not decisive for the present argument. Nevertheless, it should not be disregarded that the increasingly popular approval of the prohibition of alcohol inspired people to look for wine substitutes.[85]

As for Greek medical theory, its gradual fading away in favor of the Prophet's medicine altered the standards of medieval Islamic pharmacology. However, the ideas of Greek medicine never disappeared completely from the life of the Cairenes. Some of the Galenic norms and ways, apparently absorbed by the Islamic tradition,[86] survived the Middle Ages and kept the Egyptians attached to their belief in both healing and prophylactic qualities of various sweet concoctions. So much so that Edward Brown, visiting Egypt as late as in the seventeenth century, could still observe that "the Egyptians have inclinations towards medicaments which they take voluntarily, whether they are sick or not; they use electuaries to fight the heartburn; they have a lot of syrups and mixtures which are responsible for quite diverse things."[87]

Nevertheless, some things changed. Many beverages that had been elaborate and therapeutic until at least High Middle Ages, with time became more common and simplified. Some of about seventy syrupy "drinks" listed by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa as sold in the markets of Cairo disappeared, while the few which survived underwent a process of significant transformation. One of the most characteristic manifestations of the process was the appearance of the so-called *sorbet* which, absent from the Cairene streets and tables of the Middle Ages, from the sixteenth—seventeenth centuries became "the ordinary drink of the Turks, Maurs and Arabs."[88] The history of what in the Ottoman Cairo developed into "sherbet," or a kind of lemonade made of sugar and lemon juice diluted with water, drunk both to quench thirst and to wash down the food,[89] has some interesting threads.

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[85] See Goitein, *Daily Life*, 253.

[86] For the study of medical works whose authors did not confine themselves to commenting the appropriate *ḥadīths*, but attempted to combine them with legacy of the Graeco-Islamic medical lore, see Irmeli, *Prophet's Medicine*.

[87] Brown, *Voyage*, 187.

[88] Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 45.

[89] See Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 184. Stochove maintained that sorbet was "good to drink." And that it was prepared "in huge quantities and transported to all the Turkey, and was considered the best in the Levant;" Stochove, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 95. See also Brémond who mentioned that distilled waters sold in Bayn al-Qaṣrayn were "agreeable and delicate, of all kinds of fruits;" Brémond, *Voyage*, 48. In his "On Drink-

One of them refers to the fact that it once was a tonic *sharāb*, in its simplest form a thickened mix of acid fruit juice and sugar perfumed with musk or rose-water.[90] The other is that somewhere halfway between the *sharāb* and sherbet there was *as-sukkar wa-l-laymūn*, or sugar with lemon juice, a mix which on more festive occasions and parties was poured into pools or fountains (interchangeably with dissolved sugar drink) and from there to the officers' and troops' cups.[91]

The popularization of the sugar-and-lemon drink, now styled "lemon sherbet" and paralleled by the popularization in Cairo of raisin sherbet,[92] paved the way for enriching the street offer with beverages which in earlier epochs (and in more sophisticated versions) were considered medicinal. This referred, above all, to drinks made of various fruits, carob, licorice root, or tamarind (still popular until nowadays), but also to a beverage like "soobya," once a tonic and digestive made of flour, rue, mint, and, sometimes, a sweetener.[93] Its nineteenth-century version was made of the "pips of the ʿabdallawee melon, moistened and pounded, and steeped in water, which was then strained and sweetened with sugar; or made with rice instead of pips," and sold in the streets of Cairo.[94]

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ing and Eating," 36, Şavkay discusses the sixteenth-century records by certain Spanish prisoner according to whom sherbet "was prepared by boiling fruit like cherries, apricots and plums with sugar or honey." For the nineteenth century see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 411–12: "Leur boissons consistent en sorbets . . .; les pauvres ne boivant, pour la pluepart, que de l'eau pure ou de mauvais sorbets." In the English language the term sherbet was first recorded in the eighteenth century (according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*).

[90] Cf. the recipes in *Wuṣla*, 508 and *Kanz*, 168, n. 451, where a more sophisticated version of *sharāb* is described.

[91] See, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/3, 939; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VIII, 166; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 445.

[92] A beverage was apparently first common among the Turks stationed in Egypt. Cf. Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 188: "A lot of Turks drink the juice of raisins, for there is no true wine."

[93] The beverage called *sūbya* is, in fact, even more poorly documented that *fuqqāʿ* or *aqsimā*. All that is known for the moment about this kind of drink derives from an entry in *Lisān al-ʿArab*, where "*sūbya*" is defined as a "well-known wine [*nabīdh*] made of wheat and often drunk by the people of Egypt" (*Lisān al-ʿArab*, I, 477), and from a number of surviving recipes according to which *sūbya* drinks were made with rue and mint, often (but not always) with sugar, and never with a sour ingredient. Some of their versions were characterized as being "beneficial in case of phlegm, repletion, and good for the soul" and others as "to be drunk in the winter and in the summer; cooling and fattening;" see *Kanz*, 160, nn. 429–34; Ibn Mubārak Shāh, *Zahr*, fol. 23a; *Wuṣla*, 503–4.

[94] Lane, *Manners*, 155, 324–3. Cf. al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 73 (fol. 18r): "they say the ʿAbdallī melon is useful for health and they eat it with sugar."

It cannot be excluded that Egyptians' sticking to syrups, as well as the popularization of sweet fruity sherbets and beverages like "soobya" in the post-medieval period was, apart from the above-mentioned reasons, also an effect of the recurring epidemics of plague which, starting with the disastrous 749/1348 outbreak, continued to hit Egypt in irregular though frequent intervals until the end of the nineteenth century.[95] Made of fruits and sugar, or ingredients popularly considered by medieval Cairenes as antidotes for plague, these preparations might still have retained in the popular belief their healing or prophylactic properties in the centuries that followed.[96]

The Black Death and its recurrences may be also a clue to the mystery behind the disappearance of *fuqqāʿ* from the diet of the Islamic world. This disappearance, paralleled by the abandonment of the manufacture of the sphero-conical vessels, took place in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries in as yet unexplained circumstances.[97] Since most of the area where *fuqqāʿ* was appreciated was hit by the Black Death, it is not impossible that it was the resulting depopulation, hunger, and the ruin of the local economies which, having inevitably changed the habits and priorities of everyday life, in some way eliminated the beverage and its fancy gourds from the shopping lists of the local inhabitants. In fact, it is not impossible that the demographic disaster simply limited both the supply and the demand and that the new generations did not feel like cultivating the strange habit of sucking the foamy beverage out of the heavy little jars anymore.

It is not impossible, either, that people rejected *fuqqāʿ* because they considered it an article in some way favoring the plague. Unlike sugar, some fruits and sugary syrups (even though diluted) which, in popular perception, proved effective in curing and/or resisting the disease, *fuqqāʿ* might have been considered corrupted for some reasons. Its gaseous and

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[95] For the discussion on the Black Death, its recurrences, and on their death toll see Dols, "Second Plague Pandemic," 164–89; idem, "General Mortality," 397–428.

[96] For the conviction referring to the medicinal qualities of sugar see above, nn. 23–24; for the use of purslane seeds, melons, pears, quince or pomegranates as antidotes for plague see, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 55; ibid., III/1, 235–6; ibid., III/2, 577; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 689, 738, 770; ibid., II, 6.

[97] The beverage vanished from Persian and Arabic sources in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. It seems that al-Maqrīzī's mention of "*dakākīn al-fuqqāʿiyyīn*" or the "shops of the *fuqqāʿ* dealers" (*Sulūk*, II/3, 817) may be one of the last, if not the last record of *fuqqāʿ* by the Arabic author. For the comments and references regarding the occurrence of the term "*fuqqāʿ*" in classical Persian literature see Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 86; for details on the archeological evidence see ibid., 73, 84, 86.

foamy nature could stir up suspicions, particularly that the idea of plague epidemics being caused by miasma, or poisonous vapors filled with particles from decomposed matter, and transmitted though the inhaled corrupted air, was not unknown in the medieval Near East.[98] Moreover, it was also understood that the plague could spread through contagion, with not only the sick themselves, but also their clothes and utensils contaminating the air and making others ill.[99] Under such circumstances, the idea of using reusable public vessels, such as the *fuqqāʿ* jugs sometimes were,[100] might have grew highly unpopular. Since these are, however, only speculations, the question why the *fuqqāʿ* at some point lost its appeal has to remain unanswered.

[98] Dols, *Black Death*, 88–90; Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, 91–2. Besides, according to al-Isrāʾīlī, some varieties of *fuqqāʿ* were indeed highly harmful; see al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 605; also above, p. 468.

[99] Dols, *Black Death*, 92; Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, 92.

[100] Although the people of stature apparently "would not drink from somebody else's vessel, and once they had emptied their gourd they would discard it" (Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 83), it does not mean that the *kīzān al-fuqqāʿ* were as disposable as porous earthenware vessels generally would have been. Discarding the gourd after the use seems to have referred, above all, to the rich. In his market inspector's manual, Ibn al-Ukhuwwa clearly states that the *fuqqāʿ* dealer should clean the inside of the *kīzān* jugs with a coarse *miswāk*, or a small brush of nice-smelling wood (also used for tooth brushing and chewing) every time before they are filled, and that, when they get old and begin to smell, he should not use them anymore; Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 198; the problem is partly mentioned in Ghouchani, Adle, "Sphero-Conical Vessel," 84. On disposable pottery see above, part II, chapter IV.2.B.3. "Serving. Presentation and tableware," p. 429 and the references therein. On beer in the context of plague epidemics see below, chapter VI.2. "Beers of Egyptians," p. 491.

CHAPTER SIX

ALCOHOL AND ITS CONSUMPTION IN MEDIEVAL CAIRO[1]

A medieval European traveler, while passing across Egypt on his way to the Holy Land, noticed that "the heathen drank no wine but only water."[2] Indeed, in the end of the fifteenth century, when these words were noted down, the local "heathen" did not drink much wine. Doubtlessly, in the previous centuries they drank more. But in Cairo of the Middle Ages alcoholic beverages were never universally scorned. The attitude towards drinking depended on the time in history and the social setting but, generally, neither the local population nor the members of the foreign ruling elites nor the multinational soldiery garrisoned within the city area were avowed abstainers. Generally, different social groups drank different drinks. The particular preferences of the Mamluks notwithstanding, the city's population enjoyed, above all, wine and beer, two basic kinds of alcohol drunk in the Mediterranean-Near Eastern world since remote antiquity. And, as in antiquity, but also as in Europe of the Middle Ages, the choice between them was a matter of social standing: grain beer, whose production was easier and cheaper, was generally the drink of the common people, while wine, more expensive due to its tricky fermentation and the demands of viticulture, was the beverage of the rich.[3]

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter was published as Paulina B. Lewicka, "Alcohol and its Consumption in Medieval Cairo: The Story of a Habit," *SAI* 12 (2004): 55–98.

[2] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102. See also de Villamont, *Voyages*, 231: "Those who are zealots and observe their law, do not drink anything but water" but sometimes "they put sugar in it, or honey, to make it more delectable."

[3] On various aspects of alcohol consumption in medieval Islam see, for instance, Peter Heine, *Weinstudien: Untersuchungen zu Anbau, Produktion und Konsum des Weins im arabisch-islamischen Mittelalter* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1982); *EI2*, IV, "Khamr" by J. Sadan and A.J. Wensinck; Ashtor, "Diet," 147–51; Melikian-Chirvani, "The Iranian *Bazm*," 95–120; Charles Perry, "The Wine *Maqāma*," in Rodinson, Arberry, and Perry, *Medieval Arab Cookery*, 267–72; Sadan, "Vin," 129–60; Pieter Smoor, "Wine, Love and Prise for the Fatimid Imams, the Enlightened of God," *ZDMG* 142 (1992): 90–104; David Waines, "Abū Zayd al-Balkhī on the Nature of Forbidden Drink: A Medieval Islamic Controversy," in Waines, *Patterns*, 329–44. See also some comments in Richard Tapper, "Blood, Wine and Water: Social and Symbolic Aspects of Drinks and Drinking in the Islamic Middle East," in Zubaida and Tapper, *Taste of Thyme*, 215–31. Montgomery Watt, "Islam and Wine-drinking," in Traini, *Studi in onore di Francesco Gabrieli*, II, 847–50.

Through the ages of Cairene history, alcoholic beverages, entangled in political and religious developments, depended more on prevailing doctrinal currents than on people's habitual or taste inclinations. Therefore, the story of these beverages' consumption is—not surprisingly—a turbulent one. Due to very fragmentary evidence, however, it is not possible to reconstruct all of its details. Unlike the literature produced, say, in Abbasid Baghdad or in Iraq in general, the literary output originating in medieval Egypt lacks descriptions of drinking bouts and tavern expeditions or works written in praise of the inebriating beverage. In fact, the bulk of the information on wine and beer consumption in Cairo comes from the chroniclers' accounts of various decisions taken by the authorities in reference to the presence of these drinks on the market. Such accounts have their obvious drawbacks—they are often deprived of a wider context, exaggerated, and far too incomplete to serve as evidence of popular attitude regarding the problem in question. Imperfect as they are, they nevertheless form a set of records that mark, more or less clearly, the course of history of the alcoholic drinks in Cairo. Supplemented, in the case of wine, by records of its use and its overuse, these accounts have to suffice to define some general tendencies and phenomena of this tiny section of the city culture's culinary-historical profile.

1. Drinks of the Mamluks

Of all the alcoholic beverages drunk in medieval Cairo, koumiss, whose popularity was most limited in time and social space, is also the least documented specialty. In fact, this fermented mare's milk with the alcohol content of between four and five percent[4] was introduced to Egypt by the Turkish mamluks and the taste for it never reached beyond the Mamluk milieu. Koumiss must have been relatively popular among the mamluks,

[4] For data on koumiss see, for example, Şavkay, "Cultural and Historical Context," 76; *EI2*, V, "Kumis" by J.A. Boyle. Also Shephard, *Pickled*, 144, where it is stated that nomads from different regions make many fine distinctions about the way koumiss is made and used. Shephard also quotes William of Rubruck, a thirteenth-century French emissary, according to whom one method involved the mare's milk, on the edge of fermenting, being poured into a large skin bag and beaten. They used "a piece of wood made for that purpose, having a knot at the lower end like a man's head, which is hollow within; and so soon as they beat it, it begins to boil like new wine, and to be sour, and of sharp taste; and they beat it in that manner till butter comes.... After a man hath taken a draught, it leaves a taste behind it like that of almond milk, going down very pleasantly, and intoxicating weak brains, for it is very heady and powerful."

although the written evidence confirms only two cases of sultans who drank it in huge quantities. One was aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars who possibly died from abusing the drink.[5] The other was aẓ-Ẓāhir Barqūq, in whose times "it was one of the features of the kingdom" that the sultan and the amirs used to gather, twice a week—on Sundays and Wednesdays—on the Hippodrome below the Citadel, wearing their best uniforms, to drink koumiss together from their china bowls. The customary ceremony is said to have vanished together with Barqūq's sultanate.[6] The subsequent generations of Circassians apparently did not fancy the beverage.

Another fermented preparation that the Mamluk elites enjoyed was *shashsh*,[7] a drink whose inebriating effects Ibn Iyās compared to the results of drinking koumiss. In one case, however, *shashsh* made its consumer "fall on the ground like a log" and lose consciousness, while his companions were completely drunk.[8] True, in this very case the fact that *shashsh* was improved with somniferous henbane[9] significantly helped in producing

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[5] On causes of Baybars's death see Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt. Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century* (London and New York: Longman, 1992), 268. It will probably never be known if the last beverage Baybars drank was poisoned or not; since koumiss is perishable, however, it could simply have gone bad during the long journey across the Syrian Desert.

[6] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 393 (the annal for 791/1389); cf. also Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XI, 256; and al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 590.

[7] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 201–2, 393, 501. Ibn Iyās uses various spellings to designate the drink, and thus Sh-Sh as well as Sh-Sh-R-Sh and Sh-Sh-Sh, read *shushush*, are possible. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VI, 798, 799; XI, 153; XV, 144, spells it *shushush*, too. In the cookery books (*Wuṣla*, 504; *Kanz*, 153, n. 408, and 159–60, nn. 426, 427, 428) Sh-Sh is used. It seems, however, that "*shushush*" is a more correct spelling of the word. See Andrzej Zajączkowski, "Chapitres choisis du Vocabluare arabe-kiptchak <Ad-Durra al-mudii'a fi lugat at-turkiya> (III)," *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 32/2 (1969): 21, 45 and 53, line 8, where Turkic "*süçi*" ("sweet wine"), is translated into Arabic "*shushush*." Many thanks to Dr. Kristof D'hulster for providing me with this information and pointing out the Turkic context of the word. See also an account by Ibn Faḍlān who, while at the banquet held by the king of the Volga Bulgars, observed that after the food had been eaten the king had a cup of drink made of honey which they called *as-sujūw* and which is a day and night old ("wa-hum yusammūnāhu shurāb al-ʿasal li-yawmihi wa-laylatihi." Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlān was the caliph al-Muqtadir's envoy to the Volga Bulgars' king in the year 308/920–21. See Ibn Faḍlān, *Kitāb*, 49 and 155, nn. 246, 247. Cf. also Dreher, "Regard," 80 where *šašš* is referred to as non-alcoholic drink; see also *EI2,* VI, "Mas͟hrūbāt" J. Sadan.

[8] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 201; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1 305; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XI, 153.

[9] Henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*; Ar. *banj*), a poisonous plant of the family Solanaceae, was historically used, in combination with other plants, as an anesthetic potion, as well as for its psychoactive properties in magic brews. For its use in Islamic medicine see Levey, *Medical Formulary*, 246, n. 45. According to Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-ʿArab*, it was added to wine in order to make it stronger (*Lisān al-ʿArab*, II, 216). In the fragment referred to above, Ibn Taghrī Birdī uses the verbal form "*tabannaja*" apparently to designate losing consciousness, or being anaesthetized, with *banj*; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XI, 153.

such a result. Nevertheless, it is also quite probable that *shashsh*, made of flour, sugar, and raisins,[10] was in fact stronger than koumiss. So were, most probably, *bashtakī* and *timur bughāwī*, two intoxicants which Ibn Taghrī Birdī compared to *shashsh*.[11] About *bashtakī* not much is known; *timur bughāwī*, however, has a record in the local history. Its name derived from the name of amir Timur Bughā al-Manjakī who, in 797/1394–5, invented this inebriating, raisin-based beverage.[12] *Timur bughāwī* was to change the life of sultan Barqūq. Once a teetotaler, he now started to join his officers to drink the new beverage, soon becoming a regular alcohol consumer and, therefore, a frequenter of drinking bouts.[13] This, in turn, contributed to his death: imported honey, fowl, and the alcohol he consumed after a polo game in 801/1399 proved to make a deadly mix.[14]

Be that as it may, from the ritual point of view, neither the *shashsh*, nor *bashtakī* or *timur bughāwī*, were important enough for the Mamluk elite to make them devote two sittings a week to its consumption, as was the case of koumiss. Instead, *shashsh* seems to have been customarily served during routine Circassian Mamluk parties. Another fermented intoxicant

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Cf. Zajączkowski, "Chapitres," 60 and fol. 6r, line 5, where "*bängi*" is translated into Arabic as "*hashīsh*." For more information on *banj* and *tabannaja* see also Rosenthal, *Herb*, 19–20.

[10] See two recipes for *shashsh* included in *Wuṣla*, 504; also basic ingredients of the drink as mentioned by Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501. Both the alcoholic nature of *shashsh* and the fact that it was made of grapes/raisins are explicitly confirmed by the linguistic literature of the period. See the medieval Arabic–Mamluk-Kipchak Turkish vocabulary edited by R. Toparlï, S. Cögenli and N.H. Yanïk, *El-Kavânînü'l-Külliyye li-Zabti'l-Lügati't-Türkiyye* (Türk Dil Kurumu 728) (Ankara, 1999), 79, where "*shüshüsh*" is defined as "a kind of wine made of green grapes;" and folio 70b where line 13 reads: "wa lahum nawʿ min az-zabīb yuqāl lahu shushush;" also a dictionary of Mamluk-Kipchak Turkic edited by R. Toparlï, H. Vural & R. Karaatlï, *Kïpçak Türkçesi Sözlügü* (Türk Dil Kurumu 835) (Ankara, 2003), 244, where "*süçi*" (I) is defined as "wine or an alcoholic drink made of grapes," and 255, where "*shüshüsh*" is "a kind of wine made of green grapes." I am grateful to Dr. Kristof D'hulster for providing me with these references.

Shashsh, however, was clearly not always one and the same product. There was also a version of it which was prepared of rice cooked into thick paste; to this water, sugar or honey, and rue was added and the concoction was then buried in the sand for the winter; see *Kanz*, 159–60, n. 428. According to another recipe, dough yeast, five jugs of *fuqqāʿ*, musk, and rose-water were also added to the rice paste, in addition to sugar and honey. The concoction was then buried in straw for half a day; see *Kanz*, 153, n. 408; also recipes n. 426 and 427 in *Kanz*, 159.

[11] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 144.

[12] To make *timur bughāwī*, for each 10 *raṭls* (with one *raṭl* equaling ca. 450 grams) of raisins 40 *raṭls* of water were needed; the mixture was to be kept in jars buried in horse dung; after "some time" it was ready to drink.

[13] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 826; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 477.

[14] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 936.

drunk on such occasions was *būza*, a beverage whose otherwise uncertain nature can hardly be explained if examined independently of beer.

2. Beers of Egyptians

The history of beer in Egypt and its capital is somewhat better documented than that of fermented mare's milk. Yet, due to the beverage's low social standing, the evidence relating to it is still very fragmentary. The basic term that the Arab-language sources use to designate beer in the Egyptian context is *mizr*. In the times of the Prophet, the term *mizr*, apparently not clearly understood in his own milieu, was used in Yemen in reference to an intoxicant beverage made of barley, which was commonly drunk in this country. As some Yemenites once explained it to the Prophet, "our country is cold and gloomy, and we live from the cultivation of the soil; if not for *mizr*, we would not be able to do our work."[15] When and how the name *mizr* first appeared in Egypt is difficult to establish. Although its earlier use cannot be ruled out, it is not impossible that it was popularized by the Yemenite troops who, following the 21/642 conquest of Egypt, settled in the newly founded town of al-Fusṭāṭ.[16]

In fact, no hints regarding the post-conquest *mizr* production process in Egypt can be found in written sources of the time. Considering, however, the invariability of the elements that are essential for brewing and the conservative attitude of Egyptians towards their traditional practices, one has good reasons to believe that the general features of medieval beer production did not differ much from what the ancient Egyptian records relating to this beverage say. This would mean that to make *mizr* in medieval Cairo one had to, as in antiquity, first sprout some quantity of wheat (to obtain active enzymes), then grind it and mix with cool water. The resulting pulp had to be mixed with another portion of wheat that (sometimes sprouted, sometimes not) had also been ground, then mixed with hot water, and heated (in order to make starch susceptible to work of enzymes). The resulting mass was then sieved and fermented so that yeast could change sugars to alcohol.[17]

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[15] Maḥmūd Ibn ʿUmar az-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Fāʾiq fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* (Lebanon: Dār al-Maʿrafa, n.d.), III, 363; see also numerous *ḥadīths* referring to the Yemenite *mizr*.

[16] For details on the Arab tribes which settled in al-Fusṭāṭ see Kubiak, *Al Fusṭāṭ*, 93–7.

[17] On ancient Egyptian brewing see Delwen Samuel, "Brewing and Baking," in Nicholson and Shaw, *Ancient Egyptian Materials*, 538–41; Darby, *Food*, 529–50; on beer production and consumption in ancient Mesopotamia, see Abdalla, *Kultura*, 289–95; Jean Bottéro, *The*

In ancient Egypt, it was barley or emmer wheat that were used in the process. In the Middle Ages, neither of them was used for beer-making anymore. Barley lost its role both as a staple food and as a grain used in the brewing industry at some point in the Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic epoch,[18] though the occasional use of barley in local beer-making cannot be ruled out.[19] More or less in the same period, emmer wheat was generally replaced with wheats, particularly with hard wheat (*Triticum durum; qamḥ*, *ḥinṭa*), and it was this cereal from which in medieval Egypt bread and beer were made. Although some of the records name also *mizr* made of *dhurra* (sorghum), this could hardly be valid for the pre-late fifteenth-century Cairo—save for some possible particular ethnic preferences.[20]

Oldest Cuisine in the World, 89–93; M. Stol, "Beer in Neo-Babilonian Times," in Milano, *Drinking in Ancient Societies*, 155–83. On beer and its production in various cultures, McGee, *Food and Cooking*, 739–41.

[18] In the fourth century C.E., barley beer, produced in Egypt from Pharaonic times on, almost disappeared from the documentation; possibly, it was replaced by wine; Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 32.

[19] According to what Eliyahu Ashtor maintains, "the inhabitants of a number of coastal cities in Egypt" drank a particular kind of spiced barley beer: the beverage, called "*keshkāb*," was "made of barley which had been sprouted, dried and milled, and then fermented with mint, rue, nigella, lemon leaves, and pepper" (Ashtor, "Diet," 148). Ashtor, however, does not indicate how he arrived at this conclusion. At the same time, the two references he quotes do not support his assertion. Indeed, Nāṣer-e Khosraw saw in Tinnīs a drink of *kashkāb* being sold in the summer "since it is a tropical climate and people suffer so from the heat," but in his account there is no indication regarding the ingredients or the production process (see *Nāṣer-e Khosraw's Book of Travels*, 39; Arabic text in *Safarnāma*, Beirut 1983, 76); Dozy's *Supplement*, whom Ashtor also quotes, defines *kashkāb* as "sorte de boison faite de farine d'orge" (*Suppl.*, II, 472) which has little to do with the sophisticated spicy recipe given by Ashtor and equally little in common with beer in general. Cf. also above, chapter V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*: quasi-alcoholic drinks," p. 475–6 and n. 77, where a specialty called "kvass" is briefly discussed.

[20] See, for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 182; Sadan, "Mas͟hrūbāt." Indeed, *dhurra* was used to make certain kinds of beer; this, however, seems to have been practiced south of Egypt, in Sudan and Ethiopia, where this kind of cereal was more popular than wheat. Cf. al-Ḥalabī, *Nuzhat al-Udabāʾ*, Camb. ms. or. 1256(8), fol. 218b (as mentioned by Sadan in "Mas͟hrūbāt"), where the Egyptian author describes *mizr* as the "favorite drink of the Negroes living in Egypt." Also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, I, 172, where the author suggests that beer made of *dhurra* and called S-Q-R-Q-'/ S-K-R-K-t, was the alcohol of the Ethiopians; cf. Ibn Qutayba al-Kūfī, who maintained that S-K-R-K-t "is made of *dhurra* and it is the drink of the Ethiopians;" Ibn Qutayba al-Kūfī, *Adab al-Kātib* (Miṣr: Al-Maktaba at-Tujāriyya, 1963), 139; and Abū ʿAbd Allah Muḥammad Ibn Idrīsī, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-Mushtāq fī Ikhtirāq al-Āfāq* (Beirut, 1989), 37, where *mizr* of *dhurra* is reported to have been drunk in Dongola; all that an-Nuwayrī says in this regard is that *mizr* was made of grains (*ḥubūb*); see an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, IV, 88.

The usage might have been modified by the late ninth/fifteenth century, when Egyptian agriculture and economy, and thus also consumer habits, underwent significant changes. One of the results and, at the same time, manifestations of these changes was a forced

Be that as it may, the medieval Egyptian beer was not a delicacy—Ibn Riḍwān, a ninth-century doctor from Giza who commented on various alcoholic drinks produced in Egypt, included "*mizr* made of wheat" among the drinks that "are bad because of the swiftness of their transformation and the rottenness of their essence."[21]

One of the earliest Egyptian post-conquest records referring to the beverage dates back to ca. 401/1010, when the Jews of the holy shrine of Dammūh, south-west of al-Fusṭāṭ, were forbidden to brew it.[22] Apart from this local ban, probably as short-lived as all other prohibitions issued in the days of caliph al-Ḥākim, the Fatimid state apparently did not bother Egyptian brewers. When, however, in 567/1171 Saladin replaced the Fatimids as the ruler of Egypt, one of his first decisions was to abolish the tax on *mizr* brewery and thus delegalize its production.[23] Since, however, brewing does not demand much skill and can be easily done at home, the implementation of *mizr* prohibition was simply impossible in Egypt.[24] The demand must have been high enough and the possible profits tempting enough to make Saladin's nephew himself try his luck in the *mizr* business.[25] All in all, Saladin's order remained in force, if only officially, for almost quarter of a century. In 590/1194, al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān, son of Saladin and his successor in Egypt, was pressed by the economic crisis and lifted his father's ban. As a result, "the *mizr*-breweries [*buyūt al-mizr*] became protected and heavy taxes were imposed on them; in order to increase sale in the protected breweries [*al-buyūt al-maḥmiyya* or

(though temporary) inclusion of sorghum into the diet of the Cairenes. See Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 172–3; and above, part I, chapter II.1.A. "Millet and sorghum," p. 137.

[21] Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 92 (8/fol. 11a of the Arabic text).

[22] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 261; the steps taken against the Jewish *mizr*-brewers might have been related to the renewal of the *nabīdh* prohibition issued by al-Ḥākim in 401/1010; oddly enough, *mizr* itself does not seem to have been an object of al-Ḥākim's particular interest.

[23] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; cf. Rabie, *Financial System*, 119.

[24] A few years after the prohibitiond was issued, ʿImād ad-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, the sultan's biographer, spotted on his way back from Pyramids to Cairo a circle of men dressed "in mantels like those of Iraqi or Syrian *faqīhs*." He thought they must have been students and was surprised when they ran away; he was later told they were beer [*mizr*] drinkers; see al-Bundārī, *Sanā al-Barq ash-Shāmī*, pt. 1, Beirut 1971, 237; see also M.C. Lyons and D.E.P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 118.

[25] Although Taqī ad-Dīn ʿUmar, Saladin's nephew, denied the accusations of being a *mizr*-brewer, such an allegation in reference to a member of a ruling family is meaningful. See Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad adh-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām an-Nubalāʾ* (Beirut: Mu'assasat ar-Risāla, 1413 H.), XXI, 206–7; ʿAbd al-Wahhāb as-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt ash-Shāfiʿiyya al-Kubrā* (Gizeh, 1992), VII, 16–17.

mawāḍiʿ al-ḥamy], it was prohibited to produce home-made *mizr* [*al-mizr al-buyūtī*],"[26] which, apparently, had been commonly brewed until then.

It is rather difficult to ascertain definitely whether the obvious, though socially limited, popularity of *mizr* in the decades that followed was in any way related to al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān's encouragement, or if it was a simple continuation of local habits. The fact is that at the turn of the twelfth century, a foreign visitor to Egypt observed that *mizr*, "or *nabīdh* made of wheat," was a common drink of the local populace (*ʿawāmm*).[27] The phenomenon was confirmed some decades later by another foreigner who noticed that white *mizr* was so popular among the common people that the price of wheat, or the cereal from which *mizr* was made, increased for this reason.[28]

Whatever the true *mizr* consumption level in the thirteenth century, aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars, the fifth Mamluk sultan, considered it definitely too high. Concerned to keep up the image of the virtuous Muslim warrior and possibly inspired by Saladin's move of almost a century earlier, in 663/1265 he decided to abolish *mizr*-taxes which some of preceding rulers had levied. Thus beer production was delegalized again. While on expedition in Syria, he wrote his viceroy in Egypt ordering him "to demolish the *mizr*-breweries (*buyūt al-mizr*), wipe out the beverage's traces, and break its vessels."[29] Obviously, *mizr* was but an element of a wider-scale anti-vice campaign directed against intoxicants and prostitution. It probably never crossed Baybars's mind that equally light and alcoholic koumiss, a beverage to which he was addicted, should be included in this category, too.

It is difficult to determine what the practical impact of Baybars's campaign was. Although probably relatively effective in forcing both the brewers and consumers out of sight, it could not, however, make *mizr* simply disappear from the menu of the urban or rural less-than-wealthy population. Nevertheless, in the annals for the years and centuries that followed, the chroniclers generally do not mention the name "*mizr*" anymore, not even in the context of the prohibition orders that the Mamluk sultans reissued from time to time. This could mean that either *mizr* was not con-

[26] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105, 106; II, 5; and idem, *Sulūk*, I, 119. On al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān's attitude see also below, p. 504.

[27] Al-Baghdādī, *Ifādah*, 197 (fol. 49*r*).

[28] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 31; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368; and in Aḥmad al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ aṭ-Ṭīb min Ghuṣn al-Andalus ar-Raṭīb* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1968), II, 817.

[29] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; idem, *Sulūk*, I, 525.

sidered a true alcohol, or that it was somehow automatically included in the category of *khamr* and, as such, remained subject to the same regulations as wine. Another possibility is that with time it simply disappeared from the Egyptian diet. Throughout the fifteenth century, the agriculture of Egypt and its grain market were subjected to significant changes. The reasons and details of these changes notwithstanding, they led to a situation that Egypt, a traditional exporter of grain, in the second half of the fifteenth century had to import this commodity from Europe. The situation seems to have been dramatic enough to force people to shift from wheat and possibly, even barley bread, which they could not afford, to bread made of millet and sorghum.[30] Under such circumstances, brewing had to be out of question.

It is not impossible, however, that what also contributed to the disappearance of *mizr* from the diet of the Egyptians were the waves of plague epidemics which, starting with the Black Death of 749/1348, kept hitting Egypt. It is not impossible that *mizr*, due both to its foamy and gaseous nature as well as to the process of its production, could possibly bring to mind the plague miasma, or poisonous vapors responsible for causing illnesses and identifiable by its nasty, foul smell which came from decomposed material. These speculations, however, have to remain unconfirmed for the time being.[31]

At the same time, it seems probable that *mizr* was either subsequently replaced by *būza*, an "alcoholic drink which [Turks] make from millet grains"[32]—as Ibn Baṭṭūṭa was told while in the Crimea—or somehow transformed into it. As far as historical *būza* is concerned, the sources do not explain what it was exactly. The fact is that in the early sixteenth century *būza* appears in the records in the context similar to that in which *mizr* had been mentioned with the reference to aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars's prohibition orders of the thirteenth century. Thus in 910/1504–5, when the plague increased, sultan al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī ordered his officials to raid Christian houses and shatter the jugs of wine there, to burn the

[30] Many thanks to Amalia Levanoni for drawing my attention to this aspect of the Egyptian economy. For details regarding the declining agriculture, shortage of grain, and it rising prices see: Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 172–3; Ashtor, "Prix et salaries," 54–63; idem, *Levant Trade*, 433–512, *passim*; also Shoshan, "Grain Riots," 465–73; and above, part I, chapter II.1.A. "Millet and sorghum," pp. 136–7.

[31] Cf. the discussion on the beverage called *fuqqāʿ* and the possible reasons of its disappearance from the medieval diet; see above, chapter V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*: quasi-alcoholic drinks," pp. 480–2.

[32] Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, II, 221; cf. Şavkay, "Cultural and Historical Context," 80.

hashish and *būza* places, and prohibit all of these activities.[33] Almost a decade later the same sultan, for the same reason, again ordered to prohibit wine (*nabīdh*), hashish, and *būza*.[34] In 925/1519 an order to eliminate wine, hashish, *būza*, and prostitutes was once again issued, this time by the Mamluk viceroy of the Ottoman sultan, when the Nile waters stopped rising.[35]

Būza, no doubt, was inebriating. The accounts depicting the ill-famed party held by aẓ-Ẓāhir Barqūq in 800/1398 make it clear that consumption of *būza* and *shashsh*, intoxicants "prepared in the earthenware jars," could have regrettable effects. In this particular case, the effect was the drunkenness of a significant percentage of the Cairene populace.[36] What casts doubts on the truly beer-like nature of this beverage is the indication that *būza* for Barqūq's party was made of flour,[37] an ingredient that, if used instead of malted grains, excludes the possibility of obtaining enzymes indispensable in the brewing process.[38] It cannot be excluded, however, that the flour used for the production of Barqūq's *būza* was made of malted barley grain, as seems to be the case of certain kind of *būẓa* drunk today in Egypt and the Sudan.[39] But even if *būza* of the Mamluk epoch could, in certain cases at least, be identified with beer, many later varieties could not.

"The most vulgar people" who were said to be the main consumers of *būza* in the eighteenth century, made it of barley but, instead of malting the grain, "they put something in it to make it intoxicate." The resulting drink was "thick and sour, and did not keep longer than three or four

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33 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 76–7.

34 And forbade the prostitutes to practice their profession; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 303.

35 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 304.

36 See below, p. 530; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 81. In his version of events, al-Maqrīzī does not specify the drinks; he simply says: "and so the intoxicants were prepared, in the earthenware jars [*dinān*];" al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 902.

The accounts of Barqūq's party are among the earliest records related *būza* in the Egyptian/Cairene context. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, however, uses the term *būza* in reference to a still earlier date. In his annal for 742/1341–2 the term *būza* is reported to have been mentioned by amir Qawṣūn who, leaning through the window, shouted to amir Bashtāk that the latter could not become a sultan because he had been a *būza*-seller once; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 20.

37 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 81; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501.

38 That is enzymes that convert starches into fermentable sugars; cf. above, p. 487.

39 See Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, 114.

days."[40] In the nineteenth-century Egyptian beer seems to have been altogether unknown.[41] "Boozeh" or "boozah," however, an intoxicating liquor made "with barley-bread, crumbled, mixed with water, strained, and left to ferment," was "commonly drunk by the boatmen of the Nile and by other persons of the lower orders."[42] In fact, both the flour-based beverage from Barqūq's party and the crumbles-based drink of the nineteenth-century Nile boatmen, seem to have resembled medieval Egyptian *fuqqāʿ*, a drink more akin to kvass[43] rather than to true beer.

It seems that today two variations of *būza* are consumed in Egypt. One is *būẓa*, an intoxicating drink made of malted barley grain. Drunk in shady circumstances from earthenware vessels, it is chased with "appetizers" such as meat cooked with pepper and salt.[44] The other, known also as *booza*, is an alcoholic drink made from moldy bread, "brewed in homes and small hovels tucked into narrow alleys found only by word-of-mouth." "After two days of gurgling fermentation in a shallow tub of water and yeast, a dash of distilled alcohol is added for fortitude. A few more days in sealed plastic tubs and the foamy punch is ready to be served."[45]

3. Wine in Egypt

Fragmentary as it is, the historical evidence referring to wine is nevertheless incomparably richer than that of Egyptian beer or any other of the fermented beverages consumed in medieval Cairo. After all, beer, its popularity notwithstanding, was in a sense a deficient alcohol, a cheap wine substitute for the poor. Its role in the history of alcoholic beverages of medieval Cairo was rather episodic. In medieval Islam it was wine, the stronger, and far more effective drink, that was considered to be the true alcohol and that became, as time went by, a more and more thorny

[40] Pococke, *Description*, 182–3.

[41] Such is the opinion of the authors of *Description de l'Égypte* who, while discussing the beverages of the nineteenth-century Egypt, asserted that "La bière est totallement inconnue ajourd'hui en Égypte." (1. *État moderne*, VII, 412). At the same time, however, the term "*mazzār*," or "*mizr*–brewer," appears in the sources as late as the nineteenth-century chronicle of al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, II, 609.

[42] Lane, *Manners*, 99, 336.

[43] See above, chapter V.3. "*Fuqqāʿ* and *aqsimā*: quasi-alcoholic drinks," pp. 475–6.

[44] See Amīn, *Qāmūs al-ʿĀdāt*, 114, entry "*Būẓa*," where a description of the production process, and the interesting ways of drinking *būẓa* are described.

[45] See Cam McGrath, "The Phantom Menace," *Egypt Today* 27/01 (January 2006), http://www.egypttoday.com/default.aspx.

issue. Wine, identified with Qur'anic *khamr*,[46] a beverage literally forbidden by God, constituted—together with prostitution—an essential part of what the medieval Islam generally branded as vice.[47] Not surprisingly, its consumer was liable to penalty: the *ḥisba* manuals provided that anyone who was spotted by the *muḥtasib* while drinking *khamr* was to be given forty lashes with the whip. If, however, the *muḥtasib* considered it more appropriate, he could, following the example of the caliph ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, give the offender eighty lashes.[48] This criminal character of wine is probably the reason why the documentation referring to the question of its sale and consumption in medieval Cairo is not only confusing in itself, but is also confused in secondary literature.

Eliyahu Ashtor is obviously right to suggest that the sobriety of the medieval Muslims must not be taken for granted.[49] But, at the same time, one should treat with appropriate caution such misleading remarks as those made by a sixteenth-century French ambassador who maintained that "despite wine being very costly," the Cairene/Egyptian Muslims "drank unrestrainedly as much as they could."[50] For it was not that the medieval Muslim population at large were drunkards. Nor was drunkenness "a widespread vice" throughout the Middle Ages, and the fact that an individual judge or an Islamic scholar was reported to be a drunkard does not confirm the existence of a popular phenomenon.[51] True, in the history of Cairo there were moments when alcohol was a relatively common beverage, or when one ruler or another rarely sobered up. But there were also rulers whose piousness was exemplary, and times when people readily assaulted and demolished wine-dealers' places. The problem is that it

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[46] To designate wine, also terms "*sharāb*" (for example in al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiyya*, 606–29; al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 161–5; or *Arabian Nights*, *passim*), "*qahwa*" (for example in al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 349; according to Nasrallah, *Annals*, 555, it was a variety of dark wine) or "*rāḥ*" (for example in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 376, 579, 593; II, 61; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, III, 128; VII, 65; XV, 144) were occasionally applied; "*nabīdh*" was, however, much more frequently used, particularly in the case of al-Ḥākim's prohibitive measures as related by Yaḥyā al-Anṭākī (see below, p. 515) and Ibn Iyās's records referring to the measures taken by the Circassian Mamluk sultans (see below, p. 498).

[47] The category could also include beer, hashish, musical instruments, and singers; sometimes also homosexuality (in fact, usually meaning pederasty; for some interesting remarks regarding the homosexuality in the medieval Arab societies see Irwin, *Arabian Nights*, 168–71).

[48] Ash-Shayzarī, *Nihāya*, 108 (Engl. trans. in Buckley, *Market Inspector*, 125); Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 84–8; Ibn Bassām, *Nihāya*, 209.

[49] Ashtor, "Diet," 148.

[50] Thenaud, *Voyage*, 47; cf. Ashtor, "Diet," 150.

[51] As suggested by Ashtor, "Diet," 148–9.

is almost impossible, either in the case of the medieval Near East or in the case of Cairo of that period to define things unequivocally. For whatever clues we have, they are valid for particular individuals or neighborhoods in particular periods and, as such, do not permit any generalized conclusions.

The history of winemaking in Egypt dates back to Pharaonic times. Ancient Egyptians produced a lot of wine, though the quality of what they drank differed—which is not unusual—according to the social level. While the common people could afford, apart from beer, only some poor wine, the well-to-do and the elites enjoyed very fine wines, either locally-made or imported, particularly in the case of foreign residents who were not too fond of the local varieties. In ancient Egypt, as elsewhere, wines were named after the village, town, district, or geographic region where they were produced.[52] This was not so in the Middle Ages. And, since vintages were not the subject to be appreciated or discussed by the Muslim authors, it is rather difficult to define what exactly the city of Cairo drank throughout the medieval period. Obviously enough, there were quality wines and cheap wines. The quality, however, though doubtlessly dependent on the vintage, depended even more on the kind of fruit, additional ingredients, and the technology used in the production process. These could differ significantly enough to make various products having nothing to do with each other—apart from the fact that all of them are classified as wines.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the most popular wines must have been more less the same as those mentioned by one Cairo physician in the eleventh century. According to him, the best quality wine and, at the same time, the favorite drink of the Egyptians was *ash-shamsī*, an expensive, long-lasting wine made of imported raisins and honey, fermented in the sun (Ar. *shams*, after which the wine was named).[53] There was also *khamr*, or "Egyptian wine," as Michael Dols aptly translated the name in the context, made of local grapes, clearly not as good as the imported ones,[54] and

[52] For ancient Egyptian vintages see Darby, *Food*, II, 597–612.

[53] Which was "the favored drink of the Egyptians . . . because the honey in it preserves its strength and does not allow it to change quickly. The beverage is made when the weather is hot, so that the heat brings the drink to maturity;" see Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 91; on wine as recommended by Ibn Riḍwān, and by Galenic medicine, see Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 91, n. 12). In *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ* by Shams ad-Dīn an-Nawājī, MS Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Sprenger 1195, fol. 40a, "*mushammas*" wine is mentioned.

[54] The Western travelers are equivocal as far as their comments regarding the quality of Egyptian grapes are concerned: Anselme Adorno, for example, visiting Egypt in 1470

also improved with honey. Apart from *ash-shamsī* and *khamr* there was also *nabīdh tamarī*, or "date wine," and *maṭbūkh*, in Dols's translation "cooked wine." *Maṭbūkh*, however, although indeed cooked and fruity, was not alcoholic as a rule and, as such, was not really—or at least not always—a cooked wine. If we are to believe Shihāb ad-Dīn an-Nuwayrī, an Egyptian encyclopaedist and historian of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, *maṭbūkh*, also called *ṭilāʾ*,[55] could be any juice that was cooked until two thirds of it were gone and only one third had been left. A drink prepared this way was, obviously enough, alcohol-free and permitted for the Muslims. It seems, however, that fermented versions of it, obtained accidentally or on purpose, probably as a result of undercooking and longer storage, were also consumed—if only occasionally.[56] Both date wine and cooked wine were nevertheless "bad because of the swiftness of their transformation and the rottenness of their essence" (which, by the way, applied to *mizr*-beer as well).[57]

As for genuine Egyptian wine, or *khamr*, the historical evidence referring to the technology of its production, although not as poor as in the case of Egyptian beer, is still rather scarce. Shihāb ad-Dīn an-Nuwayrī, the above-mentioned encyclopedist, in an appropriate chapter of his work, discusses a number of "names for wine from the moment it is pressed until it is drunk."[58] He is in fact the only Egyptian Muslim author to provide some clues regarding the question. The other local source are the Geniza papers documenting the life of the Jewish community of Old Cairo. From

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(*Itinéraire*, 169) or Antonius Gonzales, in Egypt in 1665–1666 (*Voyage*, 66), praised local grapes, while Mikołaj Radziwiłł, in Egypt in 1582–84 (*Perygrynacja*, 91–2), or Christophe Harant, in Egypt in 1598 (*Voyage*, 71) said there were no grapes in Egypt.

[55] Cf. the definition of *ṭilāʾ* as given by Nasrallah, *Annals*, 556.

[56] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, IV, 82, 87; cf. the mention of *ṭilāʾ* in aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, III, 612; *maṭbūkh* is mentioned in an-Nawājī, *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ*, fol. 40a.

[57] Ibn Riḍwān, "Treatise," in Dols, *Islamic Medicine*, 91–2; the fragment is also quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 44. It is probable that apart from grape/raisin and date wine mentioned by Ibn Riḍwān, the medieval Egyptians also drank wine made of other sweet fruits, such as fig, sycamore fig, pomegranate, date, and the Egyptian plum, all of which were used for wine-production in antiquity and some of which were also used for the purpose in the nineteenth-century Egypt; see *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 412; also below, p. 549, n. 282; on ancient Egyptian fruit wines see Darby, *Food*, II, 613–617; M.A. Murray, "Viticulture and wine production," in Nicholson and Shaw, *Ancient Egyptian Materials*, 592–3.

Although wine can be made of many fruits, grapes are particularly suited for the purpose: its fruit retain large amounts of tartaric acid which few microbes can metabolize and which favors the growth of yeasts. At the same time, the grapes ripen with enough sugar that the yeasts' alcohol production can suppress the growth of nearly all other microbes; see McGee, *Food and Cooking*, 722.

[58] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, IV, 86.

the data collected from those two sources, it comes out that in medieval Egypt the grapes harvested in August and September were transported in baskets to the *maʿṣara*, or the grape-presser's place (in most cases, he was Jewish), where the *ʿaṣīr*-juice was obtained as a result of treading the fruit in vats.[59] Apart from pressing by treading, the juice could also be obtained by a non-invasive mode which consisted in leaving grapes in vats called *naṭl*, to allow the juice to flow from them; of this juice the choicest wine, *sulāf*, was made. In both cases the resulting juice or, more properly, the must, was then filled into fermentation jars and left in the sun to ferment, a process that must have lasted between two and five weeks. In ancient Egypt, after the fermentation was over, the wine vessels were sealed with opercula of straw and clay and, possibly, left to mature for some time. It is not improbable that the same technique was applied in the Middle Ages.[60] In fact, the late summer season must have meant heavy traffic on the roads leading to grape-pressers' places, for it was a popularly practiced custom that people, instead of buying wine, would buy grapes and have them pressed by a professional presser. One's own wine, made of one's own must and possibly fermented and matured in one's own backyard, allowed one to enjoy the drink with confidence that it had been prepared properly and of good fruits.[61]

Despite the fact that neither the soil nor the climate of Egypt particularly suited vine growing, the Egyptian viticulture was doing relatively well by the Fatimid and the Ayyubid times. Vineyards stretched along the Nile valley, both in Upper Egypt as well as in the Delta area.[62] It is not impossible that due to the prohibition measures first by al-Ḥākim and

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[59] Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 273, where the author states that in the Coptic month of Abīb (July 8–August 6) "grapes are plentiful" and that in the month of Misrā (August 7–September 5) "the Copts of Egypt press [grapes for] wine, and make vinegar from grapes."

[60] An-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, IV, 86; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 122–4. On ancient Egyptian wine production technology see Darby, *Food*, II, 257–61 and Murray, "Viticulture," 585–91; cf. also J.A. Sasson, "The Blood of Grapes: Viticulture and Intoxication in the Hebrew Bible," in Milano, *Drinking in Ancient Societies*, 399–419. On wine production in medieval Islam see Heine, *Weinstudien*, 31–43; on wine-making technology in general see McGee, *Food and Cooking*, 727–30. For recipes for home-made wine (including the kinds which were "done the Egyptian way") see al-Warrāq, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabīkh*, 302–3, 309, 310 (Engl. transl. in Nasrallah, *Annals*, 460–3, 470–2).

[61] Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 123.

[62] For details regarding the locations of vineyards see Heine, *Weinstudien*, 4; also Ashtor, "Diet," 148. For ancient Egyptian vintages, see Darby, *Food*, II, 597–607. Vine cultivation in ancient Egypt is discussed in Murray, "Viticulture," 582–5. The Geniza documents confirm that in medieval Egypt wine was made from local grapes, although some beverages were also made from imported raisins; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 247.

then by Saladin[63] Egyptian viticulture might have suffered certain losses of acreage, though not on a major scale. Since similar measures taken by the Mamluk sultans in the following centuries were much more frequent, it must have been during their reign that the local winemaking industry and thus the vine cultivation suffered true losses.[64] In any case, by the time the Mamluk rule was coming to an end, vineyards became exceptionally scarce in the country; so much so that, as the accounts of the foreigners who visited Egypt between the fifteenth and eighteen centuries suggest, the only available wine was exclusively an imported product, mostly from Crete and Cyprus, but also from Syracuse and Italy.[65] But the European wine was, as the European visitors said, quite expensive. According to some, this was the reason why "very few people drank it,"[66] at least in the mid-seventeenth century.

Whatever the state of the art during and after the decadent decades of the Mamluk Sultanate, until more less the end of the thirteenth century the Cairene and Fusṭāṭi wine market, dependent as it was on the variable circumstances, seems to have been supplied by the local vintners rather than by foreign deliveries.[67] The last mainstay of vine-growing and of domestically-produced wine was Shubra, an area located in the northern suburbs of Cairo, whose Christian population lived by winemaking. Having experienced, and survived, some anti-Christian violence of the fourteenth century, it was finally turned into ruin in 803/1401, when one of sultan an-Nāṣir Faraj's officers destroyed all the 44,000 wine jars and the production facilities of the area.[68]

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[63] See below, pp. 519–20.

[64] Although al-ʿUmarī maintains that in his time grapes in Egypt were abundant: see his *Masālik*, 83. Al-Maqrīzī's record included in the annal for 736/1336 confirms that there were grapes in the Marṣafā area (al-Qalyūbiyya region) and elsewhere; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 400.

[65] See, for example, Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 6; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 179; von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 119 ("since none may keep wine openly upon penalty of death . . ., much wine is brought secretly into the town by the Mamelukes from Candia in little barrels covered with linen cloths"); Radziwiłł, *Peregrynacja*, 91–2; Fermanel, in Stochove, Fermanel and Fauvel, *Voyage*, 92–5; Gonzales, *Voyage*, 94/187; Coppin, *Voyages*, 123–4.

[66] Coppin, *Voyages*, 124.

[67] Even the Fusṭāṭi Jews seem to have relied, above all, on domestic production. The Geniza documents mention imported ("Rūmī") wine exclusively in the context of Alexandria; see Goitein, *Daily Life*, 259.

[68] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 594–5. According to Ibn Iyās, the Shubra area was all covered with vineyards; the entire crop was used for wine production, mostly for the needs of the Coptic Festival of the Martyr (*ʿīd ash-shahīd*) whose main celebrations were held in Shubra; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 565–7. On the wine of Shubra see also al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 69; idem, *Sulūk*, II/3, 646; and 656, where wine is shown as a reason of inter-communal

4. Time and Place for Wine Drinking

The ancient Mediterranean—Middle Eastern world was very careful to isolate the dinner from the drinking bout. The Greeks had their *symposion*; the Romans enjoyed the *comissatio*, the idea of which was adopted by them from the Greeks.[69] The Sasanian customs, or the customs practiced in Iran at the moment of the Arab conquest (and long after it) seem to have scheduled the wine-and-music party for after the meal, too.[70] In a very similar spirit, the Arabic-Islamic culture did not consider eating a good moment for recreation. This also referred to the medieval Cairene table—whatever its social setting. Debate, wine (if included), and music were enjoyed during autonomous wine sessions, the so-called *majālis al-khamr* (a variation of which were Barqūq's koumiss parties).[71]

The circumstances and scenario of this kind of entertainment varied significantly. Sometimes it was a cozy and intimate meeting, such as those held by the fictional Baghdadi-Cairene couple of the *Arabian Nights* who enjoyed wine and snacks (*nuql*) only after they had finished their food.[72] But it could also be an official, crowded, uproarious, and soldier-style banquet such as the one held on the banks of Ethiopian Pond for the Ottoman and Circassian mamluks by the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt.[73] Be it during sumptuous wine-sessions, or during intimate tête-à-têtes, alcohol was never meant to wash down the food. By virtue of the habit and, possibly, of some unclear belief that mixing wine with food was detrimental,[74] it was only after the meal had been over that *sufrat ash-sharāb*, or the Arab equivalent of Roman *mensa vinaria*, the wine table, was carried in.[75]

strife in one of the villages of the area. Also a record in *Sulūk*, II/2, 400–1, revealing prominent Mamluk officers profiting from the local wine-business.

[69] See Faas, *Table of the Romans*, 87–97; on *symposion* see also Strong, *Feast*, 15–17.

[70] On banquets and wine-parties in Iran see Melikian-Chirvani, "Iranian *Bazm*", *passim*.

[71] Or *majālis ash-sharāb*, as mentioned in al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, I, 162 or Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 62. On *majālis al-khamr* see also an-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, IV, 118–25.

[72] See "The Christian Broker's Tale."

[73] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 287–8.

[74] See al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, I, 161, 163; on other health considerations related to wine, and effects of its drinking upon human health (according to Graeco-Islamic medical standards), see ibid., 161–3, 164; also al-Isrāʾīlī, *Aghdhiya*, 606–29.

[75] To my knowledge, there is no good description of *sufrat ash-sharāb* as served in medieval Cairo. The "table of wine" as observed by Lane in the nineteenth century consisted of "a round japanned tray, or a glass dish, placed on the stool…; on this are generally arranged two cut-glass jugs, one containing wine and the other rosoglio [a sweet cordial, made especially in Italy, with raisins, alcohol, spices, etc.], and sometimes two or more bottles besides. Several small glasses are placed with these, and glass saucers of dried and

A discussion on what kind of wine goes better with what kind of food would be pointless in medieval Arabic-Islamic culture.[76]

What mattered more, in theoretical disputes at least, was the timing. As it usually is the case with theoretical considering, also in this case there was no universal agreement among the experts: while some maintained that morning was the best, others considered night a much better time for drinking.[77] The absence of one definite time standard was, it seems, a reflection of reality, where clearly no precise rules were *de rigeur*, at least not in Cairo. Shams ad-Dīn an-Nawājī, a Cairene fifteenth-century theologian who compiled an anthology of anecdotes and poetry praising *ṣabūḥ*, the morning drink, seems to suggest that wine was preferably drunk at dawn.[78] Although most of the stories and poems included in his *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ* ("The Book of the Morning Drink") relate to the Abbasid milieu, the Cairenes of all epochs must have been familiar with the custom. Indeed, Tamīm Ibn al-Muʿizz, the tenth-century Fatimid prince-poet, makes it clear that in his environment "drinking began early in the morning,"[79] while the records depicting the famous Hippodrome food-and-drink banquet of Barqūq confirm that drinking at dawn was still practiced under the Mamluks.[80]

On the other hand, the joint Muslim-Christian group spotted while drinking wine in the Cairene Quarter of the Greeks in Ramadan 587/1191 held its session by night.[81] Also Khayr Bak, the Mamluk Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, spent entire nights on drinking and, moreover, did not sober up for days.[82] The same was said of the Baḥrī sultan al-Manṣūr Muḥammad

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fresh fruits, and perhaps pickles. Lastly, two candles, and often a bunch of flowers stuck in a candlestick, are put upon a tray;" Lane, *Manners*, 153–5.

[76] Interestingly, the custom disallowing alcohol while eating seems to have lost its importance in later epochs. Richard Pococke mentions strong waters, which they take plentifully at their meals;" Pococke, *Description*, 181. Volney (the second half of the eighteenth century) discusses "l'eau-de-vie" made of raisins, flavored with anise and very strong, which the Copts of Egypt drank during supper; see Volney, *Voyage*, 141. Lane confirms that "drinking wine is indulged in by such persons [i.e. those who habitually indulge in drinking wine] before and after supper, and during that meal." Yet, the most approved time was "before supper, as they say it quickens the appetite;" Lane, *Manners*, 153–5.

[77] See Heine, *Weinstudien*, 70–1.

[78] An-Nawājī, *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ*, fols. 1b–3b, and the anecdotes that follow.

[79] Smoor, "Wine, Love and Prise," 95.

[80] See above, p. 492 and below, p. 530.

[81] True, in this case using the cover of the night could have been related to the fact that drinking in Ramadan demanded taking some extra protective measures; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 24.

[82] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 255, 326.

(762–764/1361–1363) who, even when removed from power and imprisoned in the Citadel, "did not sober up day and night."[83] In fact, there was a theory which, strongly set in the Galenic humoral doctrine, advocated drinking wine "at the beginning of the night after one has digested his food."[84] The suggestion was explained by the working of wine, which was believed to penetrate the nutriment and help "the liver with its moderate hotness in digesting the pure nutriment into the blood."[85] This, however, could not have been common knowledge and, as such, can hardly be used to explain the above-mentioned cases.

Obviously enough, the chroniclers did not provide details regarding individuals' drinking time too often; judging from these few examples, however, one may assume that in Cairo drinking hours depended on the circumstances and the occasion rather than on a binding custom.[86]

The style of Turkish soldiers who, since 1517, scandalized the Cairenes with their open drinking and drunkenness,[87] was by no means typical for the late-medieval standard of the city. Neither during the centuries of the Ottoman occupation, nor in the Mamluk epoch was drinking in the street practiced in Cairo. Showing up drunk was avoided, too—that was clearly why only one soldier was caught when the viceroy Āl Malik al-Jūkandār encouraged the city's populace to hunt people in a drunken state.[88] What could still pass in the Fatimid and Ayyubid epochs—even if it was considered unseemly by some—was not tolerated under the Mamluks.

Alcohol, no doubt, was drunk in Cairo. Where this was done, however, is not always obvious. In fact, the case of the Egyptian capital in the Middle Ages is particularly labyrinthine in this respect. The so-called Mesopotamian "taverns," being frequent scenes of action of poems and

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[83] Ibid., I, 592–3.

[84] Ar-Ruhāwī, *Adab aṭ-Ṭabīb*, 117; Engl. transl. in Levey, "Medical Ethics," ibid., 55.

[85] Ar-Ruhāwī, *Adab aṭ-Ṭabīb*, 117; Engl. transl. in Levey, "Medical Ethics," ibid., 55.

[86] In theory, the best drinking hours depended also on the season of the year: to start the bout in the winter, one should have chosen the time between afternoon (*ʿaṣr*) and the end of the first third of the night, while in the summer the time span between noon (*zuhr*) until late evening was preferred. However, whether this rule was in force or not is impossible to confirm; see Heine, *Weinstudien*, 70–1. Al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 163, refers the optimal time for wine sessions to the position of the moon in relation to planets.

[87] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 208; over eighty years later, Muṣṭafā ʿAlī of Gallipoli could still observe with disgust that it happens that the Egyptian *jundīs* [i.e. mamluks] "ride around with skullcaps or stroll through the bazaars bare-headed and drunk;" *Muṣṭafā ʿAlī's Description*, 55.

[88] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 88. See below, pp. 539–40.

folk tales, were fairly well described, and even pictured, in the literary and artistic production of the period. Historical records referring to the Cairene drinking premises are not so informative. How numerous such places were, what they looked like, what services they offered, where exactly they were located is, generally, impossible to define. Moreover, it cannot be definitely confirmed whether any kind of wine bars, or establishments offering wine consumption, existed in medieval Cairo at all. The question of consuming and selling of wine in medieval Cairo is even more confused—if not mystified—by secondary works. From these one can learn rare and somewhat mythical things about, for instance, crowds of customers frequenting Cairene drinking establishments,[89] about taverns located in the very area of al-Azhar,[90] or about Muslims who ran taverns. Not to mention, some secondary sources assert that the heavy drinking of the Mamluk elite was to be blamed for the decline of the Mamluk state.[91] To verify such verdicts, the historical records on which they were founded have to be reconsidered.

As discussed above, the availability of wine in Cairo varied according to epoch—from relatively open market of the times of the Fatimids to the stressful days of the Mamluks whose rule led first to limiting the local production to the Shubra al-Khiyam and Minyat as-Sīrj area, and then to eliminating the local wineries and reducing the sale of wine to semi-legal or illegal trade in the "speakeasy" style. The changing circumstances notwithstanding, wine in Cairo, or in al-Fusṭāṭ,[92] could be generally bought from the wine seller, who either only sold wine or who also made wine himself. It is also very much possible that in some cases the grape-pressers not only pressed other people's grapes but also made and sold their own wine. Minor dealers, both in pre-Mamluk al-Fusṭāṭ and in Mamluk Cairo, stored and sold wine on the boats on the Nile.[93]

Judging from Abū Nuwās's poetry, in the Mesopotamian circumstances, the wine-seller's/wine-maker's house (*bayt al-khammār* or *manzil al-khammār*) signified a wine-shop and, at the same time, quite often also a wine-house. But, since Cairo did not resemble urban centers on the

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[89] Staffa, *Conquest and Fusion*, 58.

[90] Heine, *Weinstudien*, 54.

[91] Or, more precisely, that it was chiefly the Mamluks' drinking "which played a determining role in the extinction of their caste;" Ashtor, "Diet," 162.

[92] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 253–9.

[93] Ibid., 259; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 646; Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 179; from al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 29, it comes out that besides from alcohol one could find many earthly pleasures on the Nile boats.

Eufrates or Tigris, any analogy, either with Baghdad or with wine-famous cities of Tikrīt or Quṭrubbul, should best be avoided.[94] True, it was not an exclusively Mesopotamian peculiarity that a wine-maker's residence adhered to his tavern—this style was practiced in Roman towns and, what is particularly significant, in the Greek urban centers of Egypt, where a thirsty company of wine addicts would raid a wine-maker's house to get something to drink—exactly like Abū Nuwās did in his home country.[95] But the portico-style of the Greek-Egyptian taverns could not, naturally enough, be continued in Muslim Egypt. Serving wine or not, the Cairene wine-shops could not, particularly from the Mamluk times on, be of too ostentatious a character, even if for the reasons of revenues they were periodically tolerated by the rulers.

As for consumption inside, it is quite remarkable that numerous Ayyubid and Mamluk edicts referring to forbidden practices do not mention the activity that usually a wine-house is designed for, namely, wine-drinking. The fact that they name wine makers, grape-pressing, wine, wine jugs, wine-selling, and drunkards, but nothing that would suggest the existence of permanent premises designed primarily for drinking, seems to confirm that there were no wine bars in Cairo, either in wine-shops or anywhere else.[96]

The Egyptian chroniclers use a number of terms while referring to what contemporary scholars call "taverns" in Cairo. The earliest record, that by Ibn al-Ma'mūn (the fifth/eleventh century), a Fatimid chronicler, mentions *qāʿāt al-khammārīn* ("wine-sellers' halls") of Miṣr (al-Fusṭāṭ) and al-Qāhira.[97] All we know of these establishments is that every year, at the end of the month of Jumādā al-ākhar, they were customarily closed and sealed, and that it was forbidden to sell wine in there.[98] In the context of wine, *qāʿāt* are also mentioned by al-Maqrīzī who reports, in his annal for 592/1196, that there was the tax on (wine) *khamr* reintroduced that year

[94] If only for the fact that the attitude of the Abbasids towards wine differed fundamentally from that of the Mamluk rulers. For the more ancient history of Mesopotamian drinking habits see Bottéro, "Boisson," 3–13; Pinnock, "Considerations," 15–26.

[95] Dyson, *Society*, 175; Anna Świderkówna, *Życie codzienne w Egipcie greckich papirusów*, Warszawa 1983, 239–40.

[96] Although there is nothing to indicate that the wine-shops served as wine-houses, we cannot rule out that in Cairo's early days there were mats spread inside or in the backyard of the shops for people to sit and drink wine, especially in the Christian neighborhoods in al-Fusṭāṭ of the Fatimid era. Particularly that the term "*qāʿāt* (*al-khammārīn*)" or "halls (of wine sellers)" may suggest some larger premises.

[97] Ibn al-Ma'mūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 104; also quoted by al-Maqrīzī in *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 491.

[98] See below, pt. III, chapter VI.5. "Prohibition," p. 516.

and the space was cleared for displaying and selling it in the halls (*qāʿāt*) and shops (*ḥawānīt*).[99] There is nothing about possible wine-consumption in the premises, though.

As for the term *ḥawānīt* (sing. *ḥānūt*), it was generally used in Egypt to designate any kind of shop or boutique—contrary to Mesopotamia, where it more often meant wine-shops and wine-houses.[100] According to the nineteenth-century Lebanese dictionary by Butrus al-Bustānī, *Kitāb Muḥī/al-Muḥī/*, "*ḥānūt*" is wine-dealer's shop ("*dukkān al-khammār*"), too.[101] It was this double meaning of the term that probably was a reason for Peter Heine's mistakenly taking al-Maqrīzī's ordinary shops neighboring the Cairo gate of Bāb Zuwayla for "taverns."[102] What in fact al-Maqrīzī reported, in his annal for 590/1194, is that the sultan (then al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān) criticized the shops' benches (*maṣāṭib al-ḥawānīt*) and ordered them to be demolished because they projected into the street. Such decisions were nothing unusual in the history of Cairo—benches, illegal stalls, or any other projecting structures caused much inconvenience in the city's narrow streets. The occasional orders to demolish them served to improve the flow of traffic and were even classified by André Raymond as an example of "certain awareness of the city and its problems."[103] The other record concerning ordinary shops that were mistakenly taken for "taverns" refers to the later months of the same year, when the *muḥtasib* of Cairo demolished shops and a stable (*ḥawānīt wa-iṣṭabl*) that were built "by certain Ṣadr ad-Dīn in the *ziyāda* of al-Azhar mosque near his house."[104] Again, the demolition was not caused by the shops allegedly serving wine to the population, but because the establishments were either built illegally or because there was a plan to reorganize al-Azhar's space, or because the lot they occupied was needed for something else. Again, such practice was not unusual in Cairo, and in particular in the center of al-Qāhira, where land was exceptionally valuable and desired.

One of the otherwise very few records that may support the assumption about the possible wine consumption in cellars and wine-shops is

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[99] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 134; see also below, p. 520.

[100] Cf., for example, Abū Nuwās's poetry; also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*. This term was also used to designate in Arabic the New Testament's "Three Taverns" (Al-Ḥawānīt ath-Thalātha); Acts (Aʿmāl), 28:15).

[101] Al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, I, 463.

[102] Heine, *Weinstudien*, 54.

[103] Raymond, *Cairo*, 171. For the legal basis of the authorities' actions see Leonor Fernandes, "Habitat et prescriptions légales," in *L'Habitat traditionel*, II, 447–58.

[104] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 120, 121.

al-Maqrīzī's report on amir Āl Malik, the viceroy, who in 744/1343–4 "seized many of wine drinkers and wine sellers in the Shubra al-Khiyam and Minyat as-Sīrj area, and from the boats and houses."[105] Indeed, in Shubra al-Khiyam and Minyat as-Sīrj, the two Cairene suburban villages populated by Christians, wine was surely not only produced[106] but drunk as well. Whether al-Maqrīzī's "wine drinkers" refers to the local Christian population, considered by that time a public enemy, or to any visiting customers who possibly frequented the place to get intoxicated, or to those who drank in the boats and houses in some other areas—is, however, impossible to determine. Similar doubts apply, by the way, to Ḥārat Zuwayla, al-Juwāniyya, al-ʿUṭūf, Qanṭarat Sunqur, al-Ḥikr, al-Kawm[107] and other city districts whose Jewish and Christian houses were in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries raided by the sultan's men in quest for wine jugs. At the moment it cannot be definitely confirmed if the wine wanted by the state forces was stored by the Jews and Christians for their own use, for sale, or for consumption inside.

This does not mean of course that there was no place to consume wine. The location of *majālis al-khamr*, friendly gatherings to profit from the pleasure of drink but also of other amusements, depended on the status of participants. Such parties, if held by the upper class, must have often taken place in belvederes, pavilions, or enclosures located in the neighborhood of any of the Cairene ponds. One such place was built on the banks of Ethiopian Pond by Ānūk, son of sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who apparently held his *majālis al-khamr* there.[108] Ethiopian Pond (Birkat al-Ḥabash) must have been particularly attractive as a party location. Praised by homesick Cairenes of "The Jewish Physician's Tale,"[109] used as settings for the popular Coptic Nile festivals,[110] it was still appreciated in the sixteenth century when Khayr Bak, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, made it a setting for a big drinking bipartisan party which he organized for the Ottoman and Circassian mamluks.[111]

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[105] Ibid., II/3, 646.

[106] See above, p. 498.

[107] The areas are named in Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 184. Cf. the wine-selling districts named by Heine, *Weinstudien*, 55–6.

[108] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 492.

[109] See Irvin, *Arabian Nights*, 126, 155. The fragment quoted by Irvin is omitted in many Arabic editions of the *Nights*.

[110] See an-Nawājī, *Kitāb aṣ-Ṣabūḥ*, fol. 65b; for drinking sessions on the banks of the Ethiopian Pond see also ibid., fols. 62b–63a.

[111] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 287–8. Be that as it may, *majālis al-khamr*, something akin to ancient Greek *symposia*, were nevertheless a far cry from taverns of any kind (in his "Essay,"

The Cairenes who were not members of the establishment had to enjoy holding their wine-sessions in locales more modest than the belvederes overlooking the city's most attractive views. Sometimes these were private homes or gardens, at other times places belonging to the city's public space. From the earliest times it was very popular among the Cairenes to drink on Rawḍa island near the Nilometer,[112] on the boats on the Nile and on the river's banks, particularly during the Coptic festivals—before they were suspended—when people bought various foods from temporary stalls and drank wine openly.[113] It is difficult to say, however, whether the wine they drank was sold there by the producers or merchants or whether it was brought by the people. We cannot rule out that some festive gatherings of this kind were also organized in the city parks.[114]

But there were also other ways and other places. Like always and everywhere, wine-drinking in Cairo was not unrelated to low forms of entertainment. There were premises where intoxicating beverages and hashish went hand in hand with other amusements. In fact, sources do not confirm *expressis verbis* that the wine was drunk on these premises but the context strongly suggests this to be the case. To designate the establishments, Egyptian chroniclers used either the name *khānāt* or *buyūt al-fawāḥish* and mention them as places where all forbidden activities were taking

150, Ashtor uses al-Maqrīzī's story on wine-sessions held by Ānūk on the Ethiopian Pond to support the thesis about Moslems who "also kept taverns"). Similarly, *maʿāqir al-khumūr*, or "wine places," a term used by Ibn Taghrī Birdī in his report on sultan al-Kāmil Shaʿbān (during whose days "the country was ruined because of his passion for entertainment and adherence to *maʿāqir al-khumūr*...") must have referred to places where *majālis al-khamr* were held, and not to any tavern-like establishments; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 140; cf. also Goitein, *Individual*, 38–40.

[112] The most characteristic place of this kind was situated on Rawḍa island near the Nilometer; see, for example, Ibn Jubayr, *Tadhkara bi-Akhbār ʿan Ittifāqāt al-Asfār* (*Riḥlat Ibn Jubayr*) (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir li-ṭ-Ṭibāʿa wa-n-Nashr, 1959), 29; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 106; idem, *Sulūk*, II, 642 (the author mentions that people pitched their tents there and that it was a place of big depravity because men mingled with women there and practiced forbidden activities. The two records by Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 379 and 384, depict two occasions when sultan Barqūq spotted, while sitting in his window, a tent on Rawḍa Nile shore; in both cases (788/1386 and 789/1387) it was Karīm ad-Dīn Ibn Makānis, *nāẓir ad-dawla* (controller of financial bureaus), who proved to drink wine and listen to the music on the island; see also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 561. For the island of Rawḍa as a party place see also *Arabian Nights*, "Ali the Cairene and the Haunted House of Baghdad."

[113] For the study of Coptic festivals see: Huda Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals on the Nile: Aberrations of the Past?" in Philipp and Haarmann, *Mamluks in Egyptian Politics*, 254–82; on Nawrūz: Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 40–51. See also, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 493; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 212.

[114] See also al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliʿ*, 162, where the best setting for *majlis ash-sharāb* is discussed.

place.[115] The latter term stands for "houses of prostitution" and needs no comments. The former, *khānāt*, or "khans," is sometimes considered to designate "taverns."[116] In fact, khans were hostels with occasional prostitute service and as such can be compared, if anything, to inns rather than to taverns;[117] it is unclear, however, if it was possible for someone other than khan guests to come in and just have a cup of wine. The Baghdadi merchant from Sheherazade's story drank quite a lot of it during his stay in Khān Masrūr, but he rented an apartment there.

It seems that the only place reported to serve wine in medieval Cairo was a certain unique place known as Khizānat al-Bunūd; though in fact neither a khan, nor a house of prostitution, it possessed some features of both.[118] Originally a Fatimid arsenal that in Ayyubid times was turned into prison, Khizānat al-Bunūd belonged to the buildings of the Great Eastern Palace and was located between Qaṣr ash-Shawk and Bāb al-ʿĪd. When al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, son of Qalāwūn, came back from his exile to assume the royal power in Egypt for the third time (709/1310), he brought

[115] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 578 (667 h.); II, 152 (715 h.), 211 (720 h.); idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 89, 106.

[116] Irvin, *Arabian Nights*, 155.

[117] The inclusion of some of the inn/tavern-style attractions in the Near Eastern khans' offer apparently occurred in the case of a number of the Cairo establishments, at least in the Baḥrī Mamluk era. Khans were mentioned by al-Maqrīzī several times in the context of the authorities' fights against various "sinful things" (i.e., above all, wine and prostitutes) that were practiced in the country. Thus the chronicler reports that in 666/1268 "the sultan issued orders to eliminate wines, depravity and prostitutes from Cairo and Miṣr (al-Fusṭāṭ), and from all the provinces of Egypt. So all provinces were cleared of forbidden activities. And the khans in which depraved people customarily stayed were taken by force, and the spoiled women were removed and imprisoned, until they married;" al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 578. In another record of the event the author is more precise and specifies that the places which were raided were the "khans that were intended for prostitution," a detail suggesting that not all the city's khans offered sexual services; see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 106. Al-Maqrīzī also adds that "people of those khans became deprived of all their belongings and some of them were banished." Also in 720/1320 the houses of prostitution (*buyūt al-fawāḥish*) were suppressed and the khans were closed. And "the sultan wrote to his governors in Syria to . . . pour out the wines, close the khans and call on people of ill-repute (*ahl al-fawāḥish*) to repent;" al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 211. Another interesting remark refers to the times of sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad who, in 715/1315, abolished many taxes on vice, including the one that constituted a fee collected from every slave man and slave woman who entered the khans to practice prostitution; see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 48; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 89; idem, *Sulūk*, II, 152. The same concerned khans of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Damascus; cf., e.g., Ḥabīb Zayyāt, "Khānāt Dimashq," *Al-Machriq* 36 (1938), 66–70, and fragments from Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba's *Dhayl* and Ibn Kathīr's *Bidāya*, as quoted therein.

On illicit activities practiced in *funduqs* see also a comment by Constable, *Housing the Stranger*, 100–3.

[118] Its story is best reported by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 425; idem, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 144–8; idem, *Sulūk*, II/3, 640–2.

with him a significant number of Christian prisoners from Syria and Armenia. A group of them was settled in the Citadel. The other group was accommodated in Khizānat al-Bunūd. If we are to believe the chronicler who was born too late to be an eyewitness to the events in question,

> they pressed [the grapes for] wine so that during a single year they produced 32,000 jars [of wine] which they sold openly. The pig meat hung there over the counter [just like sheep meat in the bazaar] and was sold without shame. They also established there places where people could gather to do forbidden things, so that the sinners would come to them and spent days at their place drinking wine, associating with whores, and perpetrating other misdeeds. Wives of many men were spoiled there in an atrocious way, as were a lot of their children, and a group of the amirs' mamluks.[119]

The edifice was demolished, to the amusement of the city's Muslim population, in 744/1343, an event that put to an end both the wine business and all other abominations that were committed there.[120] But the importance of Khizānat al-Bunūd for the present study does not result from its spectacular end or from the reports that there were prostitutes of both sexes there and that Franks "did there all the terrible things, including adultery . . . and giving shelter to any debtors, criminals and others who entered it."[121] It is important because these activities were accompanied by the production and sale of wine and, most significantly, by its consumption. It is also important because it seems to be one of the very few historical accounts mentioning the term *ḥāna* in the context of medieval Cairo—"It was one of the Armenians' *ḥānāt* [*ḥāna min ḥānāt al-Arman*]" says al-Maqrīzī on Khizānat al-Bunūd.[122]

In *Lisān al-ʿArab*, a dictionary written by an Egyptian author Ibn Manẓūr (the end of the seventh/thirteenth century), "*ḥāna*" (pl. *ḥānāt*) is defined as "wine-house."[123] But the term *ḥāna* usually means more than a mere "wine-house." The owners of various Mesopotamian premises that Abū Nuwās used to frequent and praise in his poetry did not only produce, store, sale, and serve the wine, but usually also offered services of male

[119] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 640–1; idem, Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ, 148. Mamluks of the amirs or officers were, in the military hierarchy, on the lowest levels of the ladder.

[120] See below, p. 539.

[121] Al-Maqrīzī, *Musawwadat al-Khiṭaṭ*, 147.

[122] Ibid., 147; also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 500, who notes that "when it ceased to serve as a prison, it became a *ḥāna*."

[123] Cf. also Ibn Murtaḍā, *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, IX, 188, where "*al-ḥāna*" is defined as "place where wine is sold, which is a place of the wine maker;" also al-Bustānī, *Muḥīṭ al-Muḥīṭ*, I, 491, where this definition is repeated.

and female prostitutes. And it was such an Abū Nuwās-style "tavern," run by the Franks and Armenians, that was located in a historical building in the heart of Islamic Cairo, causing much headache to the neighborhood.

This double function of the *ḥāna*, i.e. combining wine offer and prostitution services,[124] may also be the one that is more correct—rather than the mere "wine-house" meaning—for the context of medieval Cairo. It is very probable that it was in this very sense of the term that the expression "*ḥānāt* places" (*mawāḍiʿ al-ḥānāt*) was used, by sultan Barsbay's chamberlain, who in 832/1429 issued an order to demolish them, apart from the houses of sin.[125] But "*ḥāna*" was not just a name of a particular type of premises. Contemptible as it was, it helped to relieve emotions and, as such, it apparently became the term to discredit and confirm a dishonorable conduct. No wonder, then, that when in 642/1244 *qāḍī* ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz was arrested and executed, the chronicler, while commenting on the *qāḍī*'s immoral conduct and religious carelessness that involved performing his religious duties in a drunken state, compared his house to a *ḥāna*.[126] Apparently, it was also this sense of the term, both in its emotional and technical aspect, that the chronicler meant while reporting on the behavior of the Royal Mamluks who, while accompanying sultan al-Kāmil Shaʿbān during his stay in *khānqā* of Siryāqūs, drank wine there and cavorted with the prostitutes, thus turning the place into a *ḥāna*.[127]

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[124] Cf. Norden's report on "publick house" kept by a Greek woman in Alexandria, an establishment the French sailors frequented in order to drink whenever they came to the city; Norden, *Travels*, I, 27–9.

[125] The chamberlain was amir Qurqumās ash-Shaʿbānī; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 122; cf. also Ibn Kathīr's report on Ibn Taymiyya and his followers cruising Syrian *khammarāt* and *ḥānāt*, breaking the wine jars, and reprimanding those whom they caught there; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 12 (the annal for 699/1299–1300).

[126] Abū al-Muẓaffar (Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī) the author of *Mirʾāt az-Zamān*, quoted by Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VI, 350.

[127] The event took place in 746/1345. See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 689; the report is also included in Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 122. Apart from the above accounts, "*ḥānāt*" were mentioned once more in the Egyptian context: in his annal for 567/1171, al-Maqrīzī reports that the wines had been temporarily banned and wine-peddling establishments ("*ḥānātuhā*") had been closed in Alexandria, but this was repealed for the sake of Saladin's *dīwān* (financial bureau). Their places (*mawāḍiʿuhā*) were opened and their forbidden activities (*manākiruhā*) became visible; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/1, 45. It is very probable that "taverns" of some sort prospered in Alexandria. One should keep in mind that Alexandria was always very different from Cairo: Europeans of all sorts (from whom the majority of the potential "taverns'" clientele—and often the owners—hailed) were much more numerous there than in Cairo; moreover, Alexandria was not only a provincial city that, as such, was treated far less seriously by the authorities than the capital, but it was also a port city, open to the Mediterranean world, where wine constituted an important component of the culture. Cf. Eliyahu Ashtor, who maintains that the European colonies in Alexandria

As far as this study is concerned, these records do not reveal much beyond the point that wine in Cairo was also sold on the premises whose character was at least suspicious. And if alcohol-drinking was practiced in any public houses at all, it happened not so much in the wine-dealers' shops but, rather, in institutions where wine constituted just one of the attractions. The "taverns" of the Bāb al-Lūq area, a district famous, due to the Leo Africanus' sixteenth-century account, for its distractions of ill repute (one could find there the square full of jugglers and fallen women), could be of a similar character.[128] In fact, it is not impossible that the Bāb al-Lūq area was in general a kind of place that Ibn Iyās referred to as "special districts for prostitutes and music," or places where adultery, wine drinking and other abominable things were practiced openly (so much so that even if a stranger found himself there by accident, with no adultery in mind, prostitutes of the district would catch him and force him to fornicate with them).[129]

The reputation of the Bāb al-Lūq notwithstanding, one generally cannot confirm the existence of any commercial establishments in Cairo where alcoholic drinks would not be only sold, but consumed as well—except, of course, Khizānat al-Bunūd and similar premises combining various kinds of low entertainment and, possibly, some "speakeasies" of a lesser scale.[130] One can, however, attempt to form a cautious hypothesis that premises like taverns did not exist in late Mamluk and early Ottoman times. For we never read about anyone going to a tavern to spend a good time there; the wine-lovers generally drank at home or at friends' places. After all, von Harff who, while in Cairo, made friends with two German mamluks, did not go to a tavern with them in quest of wine—all three had to drink wine secretly first in the mamluks' houses, then also in the houses of Jews or

"had their taverns maintained by professional innkeepers. In a notarial act drawn up in Alexandria in 1421 not less than five innkeepers are mentioned, one of them an Anconitan, one man from Rhodes, one from Cyprus, one a native Christian, and one a Greek or Cretan. But Venetians also kept inns in Alexandria. Probably all of them offered their guests wine imported from Crete;" Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 410. For a detailed study of European medieval *fondacos* see Constable, *Housing the Stranger, passim*.

[128] L'Africain, *Description*, 50; cf. Brémond, *Voyage*, 50.

[129] Such districts (*ḥārāt*) were to be found both in the Upper (Ṣaʿīd) and in the Lower Egypt; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 167 (the annal for 778/1376).

[130] Cf. Ibn Iyās reporting on an event that took place in 927/1521, when *malik al-umarāʾ* Khayr Bak caught one of the sipahis who killed one of the Royal Mamluks in *maḥall sukr*, some kind of drinking place; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 397.

the Syrian Christians.[131] Also a group of Christians who in 928/1522 got into trouble after offending the *shaykh* of al-Maqsī mosque (he had enough of their brawl and scuffle), were drinking in a private house situated next to the mosque.[132] Also in later decades it was not very much different—in the seventeenth century the general rule was that when "they wanted to drink, they did not do it in the presence of their family, but closed themselves in a room with the invited guests."[133] Not very much different from the way some of the nineteenth-century Muslim Cairenes drank "wine, brandy etc. in secret," within a closed circle of "select parties of their acquaintance." While "thinking it no sin to indulge thus in moderation," they avoided, however, doing so openly.[134]

On the other hand, the Cairene merchant ʿAlī al-Miṣrī, together with his young and mischievous friends, whose *Arabian Nights*' story apparently dates back to the years of Ottoman occupation,[135] preferred to spend their days on eating, drinking, and listening to music more in the style of wine-session. The company either moved from garden to garden every day or stayed for a whole month on Rawḍa island on the Nile. But, again, not in taverns. Similarly, ʿAlī al-Miṣrī's brother-in-craft, the Baghdadi merchant of "The Christian Broker's Tale," did not go out to a tavern when he felt like drinking: instead, he ordered wine to be brought to his apartment in Khān Masrūr and drank the beverage alone.

To be sure, there is a narration in the *Arabian Nights* that mentions a real wine-house, a *khammāra*, in Cairo: in one of Sheherazade's stories ʿAlī

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[131] Von Harff also reported, while talking of the local "Mahomedans," that many of them "drink wine secretly with Mamelukes and Jews;" von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102, 118.

[132] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, V, 475.

[133] Gonzales, *Voyage*, II, 185; cf. also accounts by Symon Simeonis quoted in Ashtor, "Diet," 149. Interestingly, Coppin informs us that apart from coffee houses one could see in Cairo some wine-houses (*cabarets de vin*) which were run by Greeks and offered many kinds of wine, from Siracuse, Candia, or Cyprus; this wine was very expensive, which was the reason why so few people drank it; see Coppin, *Voyages*, 123–4. In fact, Coppin's account is the only record that seems to confirm the existence of some kind of wine-houses in Cairo. Due to the rather vague context of the information it contains, the record is difficult to comment on.

[134] Lane, *Manners*, 99, 153; idem, *Arabian Society in the Middle Ages*, ed. Stanley Lane-Poole (London: Curzon Press; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1987), 149–54. Lane insists that "many of the Muslims in the present day drink wine, brandy etc." in secrecy of their private homes and within a closed circle of selected acquaintances, although al-Jabartī's remarks that intoxicants are sold and bought, secretly, only by infidels; al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, II, 512.

[135] See "Ali the Cairene and the Haunted House of Baghdad." When ʿAlī organized his party on Rawḍa island, he took with him the cooks, the servants, and the coffee-makers. The latter appeared in Cairo only in the tenth/sixteenth century.

az-Zaybaq, a local rogue, walks through the streets of Cairo and, passing by the wine-house (*khammāra*), decides to go in. There are people sitting in seven rows, but depressed ʿAlī prefers to stay alone, so the wine seller offers him a small separate room where ʿAlī can get drunk by himself. Then he leaves, and walks for some time until he reaches Darb al-Aḥmar street.[136] In fact the *khammāra*, an institution whose existence in Damascus, Syrian littoral, and Baghdad is confirmed by a number of chroniclers,[137] in the historical accounts referring to Egypt is mentioned exceptionally rarely. For example, in his multivolume chronicle Ibn Taghrī Birdī only once makes use of the word, in reference to some anti-women restrictions issued by Dawlāt Khujā, the Cairo *muḥtasib*. But the term *khammāra*, as mentioned by this historian, applies to hypothetical situation and not to any particular event or place.[138] It is very much the case of other famous Egyptian chroniclers who in the context of wine generally name establishments discussed earlier in this book, and not the *khammārāt*. We may thus presume that the latter establishment was not really known in the city and that the term itself, apparently not commonly used, could be imported from elsewhere—particularly that ʿAlī az-Zaybaq was originally a Baghdadi criminal.[139] Fictional adventures of this semi-legendary hero, created in the Abbasid capital, at some point reached Mamluk Cairo, where they were "rewritten" and adapted to local circumstances.

Considering the Baghdadi provenance of the stories of ʿAlī, one should not wonder then that the establishment like *khammāra* found its way into them. The Cairene storytellers (or whoever remade the stories), however, had to care for topographical realities. It seems that as sizable establishment as the one containing seven rows of drinking people could not be placed by them in the most popular area of the city in a completely

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[136] *Arabian Nights*, "The Adventures of Mercury Ali of Cairo."

[137] See, for example, Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XII, 118; XIV, 12, 86; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 53; ibid., III/2, 510; al-Baṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Baṣrawī*, Damascus 1408 h., I, 205. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī uses the term "*khammārāt*" in the Egyptian context when he reports on the imposition of taxes on Alexandrian "wine-houses" in the late eighth/fourteenth century; Ibn Ḥajar, however, was not an Egyptian (but even if he were, the situation in Alexandria cannot be compared to that in Cairo); see Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Ad-Durar al-Kāmina fī Aʿyān al-Māʾa ath-Thāmina* (Hyderabad, 1972), II, 50. On Ibn Taymiyya and his followers cruising Syrian *khammārāt* and *ḥanāt* see above, p. 509, n. 125 and below, p. 538; on *khammārāt* run by amir Sūdūn in Damascus see below, nn. 148, 261.

[138] "For a decent woman can be recognized, even if she happened to be in a wine-house . . .;" Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 95. As for the more recent centuries, cf. al-Jabartī who speaks of a number of Copts getting drunk in the *khammāra*; al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, II, 228.

[139] Irvin, *Arabian Nights*, 145.

groundless manner. The only place in Cairo that could fit the *khammāra* characteristics as described by Sheherazade, and whose existence is confirmed by historical sources, was the "tavern" of the Armenians. In its neighborhood there ran the city's main alley that led, through the gate of Bāb Zuwayla, to the street called Darb al-Aḥmar. If the adventures of ʿAlī az-Zaybaq of Cairo were Cairized after Khizānat al-Bunūd became the lodgings of the Franks and Armenians, which is not impossible, we should not exclude the option that in popular imagination ʿAlī drank his wine in this place.

Such reasoning may sound too far-fetched. It is also true, however, that if ʿAlī's *khammāra*, located within a walking distance from Darb al-Aḥmar street, was an echo of any real premises of this kind, it could only have been Khizānat al-Bunūd. Moreover, the existence of other similar establishments is rather doubtful. There is no indication in the sources that would allow us to compare the Fatimid "wine-sellers' halls" (*qāʿāt al-khammārīn*) or Mamluk *mawāḍiʿ al-ḥānāt* to taverns like the *mashraba* in Acre in which in 689/1290 the Franks and the Muslims gathered to drink and then participated in the disturbances that finally led to the end of the Crusader states.[140] Or to places like the *daskara* that al-Ḥārith visited in ʿĀna,[141] the city on the Euphrates famous for its wines, or Abū Nuwās's *ḥawānīt* and *ḥānāt*, where one could make a policeman drink wine through a tube.[142]

5. Prohibition

It is generally taken for granted that the Egyptian winemaking and wine-selling business, just as any business of this kind elsewhere within the Islamic domain, was throughout its history run exclusively by Christians and Jews. While it is beyond doubt that the Christian and Jewish traders indeed prevailed among the wine dealers, it is, however, not impossible that before the times when "the religiosity turned into bigotry,"[143] to use Goitein's words, Muslims, too, had some share in grape pressing,

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[140] Shāfiʿ Ibn Alī, *Faḍl*, 417.

[141] *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāma* 12.

[142] In ancient Mesopotamia, beer was drunk through tubes/straws because the brewing methods left a scum on the surface; see Collon, "Banquets," 24, 25, 28; Pinnock, "Considerations," 15. For the use of straws for wine drinking in Byzantium see Anagnostakis and Papamastorakis, "Radishes for Appetizers," 147–72.

[143] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 253.

winemaking, and wine trading as well.[144] The Fatimid and Ayyubid Egypt, mentally still closer to the style of the ancient Mediterranean-Near Eastern culture than to the fresh moral order of the relatively new religion, seemed to have been quite open as far as wine market was concerned. Or, to use another of Goitein's expressions, "a certain laxity prevailed"[145] in this respect. In this Egypt, the wine business and wine consumption, since antiquity as natural here as elsewhere in the Mediterranean-Near Eastern area, were still far from being commonly rejected.

In this Egypt there was "Wine-Sellers' Street" (Darb an-Nabbādhīn) both in al-Qāhira and in al-Fusṭāṭ, and wine was openly sold, also by Muslims who, like certain "Aḥmad the wine seller,"[146] could apparently run this kind business in this epoch. In this Egypt, in which periods of "wine rush" were still possible, people could not only buy wine and consume it, but they also bought grapes and raisins in order to make their own wine. From the chroniclers' comments referring to the mass scale of such practices,[147] it does not follow that Muslims, by then not so dominant or zealous yet, avoided participation in this kind of activities or that the popular grape- and raisin-processing was left exclusively to non-Muslim communities. In this Egypt, wine dealers were not necessarily identified with Christians or Jews, neither were Christians or Jews branded as wine-dealers. Although probably far from running taverns, an activity which is sometimes ascribed to them,[148] it seems that the Egyptian Muslims of the Early and High Middle Ages (or maybe of the pre-Mamluk era in general) did not always consider wine selling or, apparently, grape pressing or even fermenting the juice, untouchable activities.

For this Mediterranean- rather than Islamic-minded Egypt, its local wine makers and their customers included, the reign of the caliph al-Ḥākim, notorious not only for the inconsistency of his religiously-motivated measures, but also for his ruthlessness in implementing them, must have come as a shock. Al-Ḥākim was not the first to use ban on alcohol as a device for

[144] And, in fact, also in vine cultivation, for the vineyards were legally property of the government or the amirs; Goitein, *Economic Foundations*, 123.

[145] Ibid., 122.

[146] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 253–9.

[147] As after al-Ḥākim's death, or during the reign of Saladin's successor, see below, pp. 516, 520–1.

[148] Heine, *Weinstudien*, 54. The case of amir Sūdūn min ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (d. 841/1438), a Mamluk governor of Damascus, whom Amalia Levanoni mentions as making a fortune from the ownership of taverns, seems to have been rather unique; Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 220. For more comments see below, p. 544, n. 261.

promoting the Islamic values in Egypt;[149] he was, however, the first to do it with determination and vehemence. But because al-Ḥākim, apart from all other things, was ahead of his time, his policy did not prove effective. His subjects, apparently far from appreciating the religious-moral aspect of the prohibition, concentrated their efforts on finding ways to evade the oppressive circumstances rather than to obey what the caliph tried to impose. The story of al-Ḥākim trying to fight the Egyptians' drinking habit started in 392/1002, when wine (*nabīdh*) was prohibited and the wine-makers' shops were ravaged for the first time.[150] Unstable as he was, in 397/1007 the caliph al-Ḥākim who had in the meantime started to cure himself with wine and music in accordance with his physician's recommendations, lifted the ban on what he had earlier prohibited. When, however, the physician died, having drowned in a pool while inebriated, al-Ḥākim, possibly enraged that he was beguiled by the late doctor's persuasions, not only reintroduced the ban on wine and ordered the destruction of the existing stock, but also ordered raisins and honey to be either burnt or sunk in the Nile waters.[151]

By that time, however, the Egyptians had already learned not to let the situation take them by surprise again and managed to anticipate the planned action. When the news of it somehow leaked and spread among the people, they proved fast enough to get to the wine shops before the ruler's men and buy up all the stock before it was destroyed.[152] Moreover, despite the horror al-Ḥākim's cruelty aroused in the country, not everybody cared to follow his wine prohibition. A few years later (in 401/1010) the caliph had to renew the anti-wine regulations and to threaten those who would dare to violate them with even harsher punishments.[153] It did not really work: when agents were sent the following year to control the raisin- and honey-dealers, they had to report to the caliph that the forbidden intoxicant continued to be made of the products. So the raisins were burnt once again, honey poured into the Nile, and the ban on their sale, import, and display was issued. As soon as the new grapes ripened,

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[149] In 170/786–7 the Abbasid governor of Egypt, ʿAlī Ibn Sulaymān al-ʿAbbāsī, having "decided to order the good and forbid the evil," prohibited *malāhī* and wines and demolished all new churches in Egypt; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 308.

[150] Al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 253–4, also 254, n. 3.

[151] Ibid., 269–70, also 270, n. 5.

[152] Ibid., 269–70.

[153] This order was accompanied by a ban on the use of wine during Mass; the prohibition forced the Christians to use a substitute made of water in which raisins or vine wood were soaked; see ibid., 289.

however, they started to sell well, for people secretly kept pressing them for wine.[154]

By the early eleventh century, there were not too many Egyptians who would care to perceive al-Ḥākim as an example of Islamic piety or his anti-wine and anti-entertainment regulations a serious and binding law. In this respect, Egypt did not differ much from Iraq or Syria of the time. The disappearance of al-Ḥākim, in 411/1021, marked the return to normality. Successful as they were in disregarding state regulations and persisting with their dietary (here drinking) tradition, people nevertheless could sigh with relief after al-Ḥākim's death. Immediate resumption of open wine-drinking and indulgence in other earthly pleasures[155] helped the Egyptians to recover from the two-decade long stress.

Unlike al-Ḥākim himself, his Fatimid successors did not consider the prohibition a burning issue. The only clear restriction was that the *qāʿāt al-khammārīn*, or "wine-dealers' halls" of Miṣr (al-Fusṭāṭ) and al-Qāhira were customarily closed and sealed at the end of the month of Jumādā al-ākhar every year, i.e. on the eve of the holy month of Rajab, and during these days it was forbidden to sell wine in the halls.[156] The prohibition during the month of Ramadan was also treated relatively seriously by both the rulers and the ruled. The cases of inebriation during the fasting period must have been infrequent, so much so that when a merchant was found drunk in Ramadan in one of caravansaries of al-Fusṭāṭ, the chronicler considered it worth recording.[157]

Apart from that, Egyptians were generally allowed to live their own way as far as wine drinking was concerned. In fact, it is difficult to gather what the everyday practice of the city's population really looked like in this respect. At the dawn of the Fatimid epoch, a Syrian visitor named al-Muqaddasī observed that the Egyptian *shaykhs* "do not refrain from wine drinking" and that "one can see them drunk."[158] Despite the otherwise dubious reliability of many of this author's records, there is no reason to distrust this observation. Authenticated by Yaḥyā al-Antākī's

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[154] Ibid., 293.
[155] Ibid., 374; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 354.
[156] Ibn al-Maʾmūn, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 104; also quoted by al-Maqrīzī in *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 49. Ashtor, "Diet," 150, interprets *qāʿāt al-khammārīn* as "taverns."
[157] Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 63; cf. Heine, *Weinstudien*, 72–3, who confirms it was generally considered improper, even for Christians, to drink during Ramadan.
[158] Al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-Taqāsīm*, 200. Al-Muqaddasī's accounts, often transforming a rumor or an occasionally observed phenomenon into a general custom, should generally be treated with caution.

accounts,[159] it provides a significant clue as to the commonness of the drinking habit. Nevertheless, the details regarding the drinking behavior remain unknown.

However common and intensive drinking was in the course of daily life, the limits of freedom were particularly flexible on festive occasions. When in 415/1025 the Fatimid caliph was passing by the vicinity of al-Maqs during one of the Coptic Nile festivals, he noticed a number of drunk women and drunk porters who carried them in baskets. Obviously, the drunken frolics of the company appalled and disgusted the caliph; nevertheless, he left them unbothered. A drunk man who on this occasion was punished with 30 lashes got the punishment for attacking somebody with a knife, not for being drunk.[160]

But the Fatimids' policy towards the Coptic Nile festivals was meaningful in itself. Details of particular events aside, the customary practices of the five annual celebrations involved, apart from their religious and ritual dimension, public wine drinking and general revelry on the boats and on the river shores, events in which usually both Copts and Muslims participated.[161] Although discussing the issue in terms of intercultural dialogue may not prove relevant, it is nevertheless very tempting to use the words of a scholar who, while commenting on the policy of the early Arab-Muslim governors and rulers of Egypt, observed that they "seem to have adopted a pragmatic tolerance towards the indigenous popular culture" leaving, as long as the taxes were paid, their Coptic subjects to their own devices.[162] In the case of the Fatimids, this referred to their Egyptian Muslim subjects as well, if only because the Fatimids' priorities, both religious and political, did not include caring too much for the local population.

But wine, included by the medieval Islam in the category of vice, could not avoid dramatic changes that the fall of the Fatimids caused in everyday life of Cairo and al-Fusṭāṭ. As Hassanein Rabie aptly phrased it while commenting on the state policy towards vice in medieval Egypt, "all through

[159] See al-Anṭākī's unique evidence showing the Egyptians' attitude in the context of the prohibition measures implemented by al-Ḥākim, as discussed above.

[160] Al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 20–1; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 145; Engl. translation in Huda Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 254.

[161] See, for example, Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 212.

[162] Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 257. In fact, the Fatimid caliphs went further than the policy of non-interference. Having adjusted the local Nile rituals to those of their own—and vice versa—they included some of them in their sophisticated ceremonial, and used them, in a slightly recast form, to manifest and authenticate their authority over the country and its population.

the history of vice taxes" a conflict is observable "between the desire to combat vice in accordance with religious conscience, and the reluctance of the rulers to renounce the abundant revenue it provided."[163] Indeed, the two attitudes can be traced throughout the history of post-Fatimid Egypt, although the historical evidence referring to them is very uneven. Naturally enough, combating vice, in the form of abolishing taxes on sinful activities is much better documented than the practice of levying such taxes in order to augment the state budget. Combating vice was, after all, a deed meant to prove piousness of its perpetrator. Levying taxes on vice meant legalizing it, and the rulers could hardly be proud of such decision to have it recorded in the annals. Anyway, possibly because of the chroniclers' self-censorship or because of the fact that decisions of this kind were taken and implemented discreetly, the contemporaneous authors generally did not mention such cases too often, unless things were too drastic to keep silent.

The diligence of particular dynasties was not of the same order here: although the two above-mentioned approaches can be traced both in the Ayyubid and the Mamluk epochs, it was, above all, under the Mamluks that attacking wine and beer, in addition to hashish, prostitutes and, in later centuries, musical instruments and singers, became a frequently and deliberately used political device. In practical terms, this meant that despite the clarity of the legally binding religious guidelines, the rulers' policies depended on their personal attitudes towards the forbidden drink. These could range from encouraging permissiveness, to carelessness, to more or less persistent persecution. Depending on the circumstances, a ruler could either tolerate alcohol sale and its consumption, or raid the wine-sellers' places and destroy their merchandise. The former way was practiced either because he himself drank, because he did not care, or because he decided to impose taxes on sinful practices in order to cover the treasury's expenses. The persecution reflected, on the other hand, the desire to implement Islamic moral principles, an attitude that could result either from the ruler's true piousness or from his design to give the appearance of piety.

The absence of any consistent policy in this domain resulted in the emergence of legal and moral chaos that affected in turn the confused city population. People were sometimes prompted to drink, sometimes discouraged from doing so, and at other times left alone in this respect.

[163] Rabie, *Financial System*, 119.

Consequently, they oscillated between old habits and new laws, between virtual prohibition and veiled permission, between forced abstinence and a drinking habit. Some, unable to harmonize the habits with the changing circumstances, were truly torn. There must have been many cases resembling that of a certain Mamluk officer who, having visited the Holy Places in Mecca and Medina, swore to stop drinking but being addicted to alcohol could not keep the promise.[164]

It was only after centuries of such an uneven policy (or despite it) that the ideas of prohibition and abstinence, pressed into people's minds in irregular albeit violent waves, managed to supplant the traditional habits and to make the Cairenes form new standards. To make such a transformation possible, however, people had first to redefine their religion, reconcile themselves with the circumstances and, finally, to create some new patterns of behavior, form new standards, and become accustomed to new ways.

In Cairo, the harbinger of the new style appeared as early as in 654/1169, personified by Saladin who, in effect of a rather labyrinthine course of events, was in that year invested as vizier of the decadent Fatimid state. Before that happened, however, Saladin, as an average Kurdish-Syrian young gentleman, probably had not lived a life very much different from that of his fellow countrymen who were far from holding alcohol in contempt.[165] Either because of a true internal transformation, or as a consequence of a deliberate plan to found his authority on a new and well thought-out image of a virtuous Islamic ruler, or both, Saladin changed as soon as he took over the vizierate. As a pious Muslim, a champion of the Sunni Islam, and a chief warrior of the counter-Crusade war, he now repented for his "wine-drinking and turned from frivolity" to "assume the dress of religion.' "[166]

The sources are not clear as to what exactly were Saladin's decisions regarding the production and consumption of alcoholic beverages in

[164] In effect, amir Sayf ad-Dīn Kahardāsh, the hero of the story, was attacked by hemiplegia and remained paralyzed until his death in 714/1314–15; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 228.

[165] In Saladin's own times teetotal attitudes were rare enough to make the chroniclers immortalize them in annals. Such was the case of the lord of Aleppo al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl Ibn al-Malik al-ʿĀdil who, while dying of colic (*qūlunj*; or of poisoning, according to another version) in 577/1182, refused to drink a draft of wine that the doctors prescribed for him as a cure. "And he died, not having drunk the wine;" see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VI, 89; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XII, 329–30. Also Ibn Munqidh, *Kitāb al-Iʿtibār*, 146, where an anecdote illustrates a rather easy attitude towards wine among Muslims in pre-Saladin Syria.

[166] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/1, 43; see also Lyons, *Saladin*, 32.

Egypt, nor how effectively the prohibition was implemented. True, it was still possible during his sultanate that Muslims dared joining Christians on a Ramadan night to drink wine with them.[167] Nevertheless, judging by what happened when his son took power almost a quarter of a century later, the anti-vice policy of Saladin must have generally been quite bothersome for the population of Cairo and al-Fusṭāṭ. Whatever their details, the effect of Saladin's decisions was far from what he originally intended. Instead of eliminating the old customs and making Egyptians follow his virtuous example, he only made them miss the past. When after his death al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān, the son of Saladin and his successor in Egypt (589–595/1193–1199), pressed by the economic crisis, lifted his father's prohibitive regulations to reintroduce taxes on forbidden drinks, the wine-(and beer-)thirsty Cairenes welcomed the new-old order with excitement. And, similarly to what happened after al-Ḥākim's disappearance, they returned to grape- (and wheat-)processing and, in consequence, alcohol consumption, with redoubled energy. The effect of al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān's encouraging move was that, apart from the increased quest for beer, the "price of grapes grew, so much of it was being pressed for wine."[168] Over two hundred years later al-Maqrīzī seemed to have been shocked to learn, from al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil's account of the event, that these days "the vessels with wine (*khamr*) were carried openly in front of the people's eyes in the streets, with no sign of disapproval."[169] In al-Maqrīzī's own times, or over a quarter of a millennium later, such a situation was unthinkable.

The tax on alcohol apparently proved not sufficient to cover the needs of the state treasury and to save al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān from the economic crisis. After two years (i.e. in 592/1196) the tax on *khamr* (as well as on beer) was increased and space was provided in the halls (*qāʿāt*) and shops (*ḥawānīt*) for its display and sale. And, as a chronicler commented, "no one could contest that, either with words, or with deeds."[170] What shocked

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[167] And that, moreover, nobody punished them—to the indignation of the chronicler. Such cases, however, could not be common (the above-mentioned situation occurred in 587/1191 in the area of Ḥārat ar-Rūm or the "Quarter of the Greeks"); see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 24.

[168] Which took place in 590/1194, when al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān took the power; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; II, 5; idem, *Sulūk*, I/1, 119. When some half a century later an Andalusian author visited Egypt, he still could observe that grapes were scarce and expensive, generally because people in the country were pressing such huge quantities of them for wine; Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 31; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368; and in al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, II, 817.

[169] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; idem, *Sulūk*, I/1, 118–19.

[170] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 134; idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105.

al-Maqrīzī most,[171] however, was that even such an indisputable and generally observed rule as "to refrain from winemaking in the month of Ramadan and not to be seen then with wine jars or drinking" was so easily disregarded by both the ruler and the populace. But the rule, apparently observed in al-Maqrīzī's own times, was not considered inviolable three hundred or so years earlier. In Ramadan 592/1196 not only winemaking became so common that the price of grapes increased again but those involved in grape processing did not even try to hide their activities.

The same can be said about the sultan's officials who collected fees for the otherwise shady business. Guided by a sense of duty and unbothered by a sense of guilt, they did even not try to act discreetly. The sums they received must have been impressive, and the situation abnormal even by the standards of the permissive city population, because soon the rumors appeared about the sultan spending part of the wine revenues on gold and silver wine cups that were made for him. To complete the picture of the vileness of this Ramadan, the chronicler adds that many women joined men on the Canal when it was opened, and on the river bank in al-Fusṭāṭ, and that "the Nile was stained with sins." But this was an exceptionally abominable year and no similar shamelessness had happened before or after it.[172]

The rulers often knew the records of their predecessors' deeds and learned their lessons from them. The account of al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān's reign must have made all subsequent sultans refrain from following his example, which was probably one of the reasons why such Ramadan never recurred. Yet, in Ramadan of the year 592/1196 such situations still could, and did, happen, despite Saladin's earlier attempts to promote chastity in the multi-religious, Mediterranean Cairene society. At the end of the twelfth century Saladin's chances to eliminate the ancient local habit not just temporarily, but permanently, were small—if only because that Egyptians were as uninterested in abstinence as most of Saladin's own Ayyubid successors. His measures were soon abandoned and forgotten. It seems that in the mid-thirteenth century, or over half a century after the virtuous ruler's death, the ban on wine was only issued occasionally in the vicinity of the Canal (al-Khalīj), between Cairo and al-Fusṭāṭ, because some time

[171] But not only al-Maqrīzī was shocked. Such was also the reaction of an earlier author whom al-Maqrīzī quotes or paraphrases and who apparently was an eyewitness to the event (possibly al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil).

[172] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 136, 137; also some fragmentary data in idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105.

earlier a man was murdered there in a drunken brawl.[173] Apart from that, the drinking habit was still very much alive among the Egyptians and the jars of wine were kept undisturbed on display in the streets. As far as the Mediterranean was concerned, this was unthinkable probably only in the Maghrebian home country of Ibn Tumart, the only place where, until then, the implementation of the innovation-free Islam proved to be relatively effective. As a result, Maghrebian visitors to Egypt were shocked not only by the sight of hashish, dancers, drinking, and wine jars kept on display in the mid-thirteenth century, but also by the generally easy-going approach of both the local people and their rulers towards the *dhimmī*s half a century later, all of which was so much unlike what was going on in the Maghreb.[174]

In Egypt, the post-Saladin generations of the Ayyubid rulers had many other worries, much more urgent than the alcohol consumption of their subjects. The last of the dynasty, aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, distrustful of his troops, was preoccupied with buying and training hundreds of foreign slaves and forging them into his Baḥrī mamluk guard. His son, Turānshāh, not only a drunkard and a party-goer, but also an unreasonable Baḥrī mamluks-hater, did not manage to enjoy his father's Egyptian throne for more than a few days. When drunk, he used to set big candles in a row by night, take a sword in his hand, cut the candles with the sword and say: "that's what I'll do with the Baḥrīs when I enter Cairo!"[175] Unluckily for him, his father's mamluks struck first.

The major shift of power that took place in Cairo following the Baḥrīs' assassination of Turānshāh did not signal major change as far as the question of alcohol was concerned. When in 648/1250 al-Muʿizz Aybak took over the power to start the long era of the Mamluks, nothing seemed to forecast the coming change. The fact that the first Mamluk sultan decided (or only approved his ex-Copt vizier's decision) to reintroduce taxes on wine, *mizr*, hashish, and houses of prostitution, signified that the sinful

[173] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 31; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368, and in al-Maqqarī, *Nafḥ*, II, 817.

[174] Ibn Saʿīd al-Maghribī, *Nujūm*, 30–1; also quoted in al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 368. When ca. 700/1301 the vizier of the "King of the Maghreb" arrived in Cairo, he expressed his indignation at the indulgence shown by the Mamluks to the Christians and Jews in Egypt; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/3, 909–15; and Donald P. Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Baḥrī Mamluks, 692–755/1293–1354," *BSOAS* 39 (1976): 555, 567; see also below, p. 542.

[175] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 284.

businesses were legal[176] and that the Cairenes and Egyptians, although probably mindful of avoiding wine consumption during the Ramadan, were otherwise left alone to enjoy their drinking habits.

The problems started when the sultanate was taken over by Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, the mightiest of the Baḥrī rulers. Unlike any other ruler before or after him, Baybars took personal interest in everything and his energy displayed in running countless state and war affairs was inexhaustible. Busy as he was with the Crusaders, international relations, inter-Mamluk strife, and the state administration, Baybars did not fail to take the issue of alcohol under his control. Because the wine and beer business was too ostentatious at the time, or because of his concern to upkeep the image of a virtuous Muslim warrior ruler, Baybars—his addiction to koumiss notwithstanding—proved to be an avowed enemy of alcohol.

Throughout his reign, Baybars repeatedly issued orders to abolish taxes on hashish, beer, and wine, to ravage breweries and wine cellars, to pour out their stock,[177] and to threat wine makers with death. The regulations were accompanied by orders to eliminate prostitution.[178] Unlike al-Ḥākim who was considered an oddity rather than a respected ruler, or maybe even unlike Saladin who spent much of his time in Syria, Baybars did not give people too many chances to disregard the law. Like the uncompromising ʿUmar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, Baybars was determined and never gave up. Neither was he famous for his mercy. He was probably one of the first, if not the first, medieval Muslim Near Eastern ruler to punish a soldier with death for wine drinking.[179]

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[176] According to al-Maqrīzī's relation of the events, sultan al-Muʿizz Aybak made a mistake by nominating certain Coptic convert to Islam for the post of the vizier. The nomination, apart from other "misdeeds" committed by the new vizier, resulted in the fact that taxes such as the fees on wine, *mizr*, hashish, and houses of prostitution were reintroduced. Since al-Maqrīzī clearly means to defame the vizier, it is difficult to gather the true version of the developments from this account; see al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; II, 90.

[177] The Islamic law was not explicit as far as the legality of pouring out someone's wine was concerned. According to Abū Ḥanīfa, someone's wine was his property and as such should not be poured out; ash-Shāfiʿī opted for pouring the wine out as possessing it was illegal anyway. See, for example, the theologians' opinions as presented by Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, *Maʿālim*, 84.

[178] Such orders were issued, for instance, in 662/1264, 663/1265, 665/1266–7, 666/1268, 667/1269 and in 669/1271; see, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105–6; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIII, 268, 275; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VII, 154.

[179] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 106. Baybars seems also to have been the first ruler to suspend one of the Coptic Nile festivals for more less a quarter of a millennium; see Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 266, and below, pp. 541–2.

And it was probably during Baybars's reign that, possibly for the first time, in people's thinking wine became linked to evil, to what was forbidden by God's ordinance and not just by a ruler's caprice. It was probably then that alcohol drinking, persistently associated by Baybars with vice and sin, started to be perceived not as an innocent old habit, for some reasons persecuted by some rulers, but as a wrong thing to do: perhaps not yet a sin, but at least a misdemeanor.

Persistent as he was in haunting and defaming the wine and beer business, he must have caused considerable decrease of the popularity of alcoholic beverages, particularly of wine. It may have been from then on that alcohol disappeared from the corner shop and gradually moved into less ostentatious places, such as secret mattamores, private houses, and boats, some of which were possibly used as "speakeasies" of a kind. Scenes such as those that happened during Saladin's son's reign were no longer possible. This time things were serious and people realized that. As one poet observed with simplicity and sorrow,

> A goblet has no more use,
> mouth has no more saliva.
> The *shaykh* woke up in the morning
> and shed tears over what has vanished since the days of his youth.[180]

Which does not mean, however, that Baybars managed to eliminate wine or beer from the Egyptians' menu once and for all. His own reign was too short to make such a revolution possible and of forty five Mamluk sultans who governed Egypt after him, not many shared Baybars's attitude or were equally determined to make their subjects live a pious life. Apart from a few, their wine and entertainment policies were not so much a consequence of their sense of religious obligation but, rather, an effect of their personal approach towards phenomena included by medieval Islam in the category of vice. Some, obligated by Islamic ordinances, exercised restraint. Others, however, were party lovers whose drinking records, as documented in the annals, were impressive (and the fact that they were often sons, mamluks, or comrades of a ruler who himself was a paragon of temperance did not matter much). Still others simply remained indifferent, while the attitude of some was moderate, verging on practical. Sultan Qalāwūn, for instance, Baybars's comrade and a true heir to his throne,[181]

[180] By Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Jazzār, as quoted by al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 106.
[181] The reigns of Baybars's own sons were too short to give them a chance of presenting their stance towards the problem in question; the older of them, as-Saʿīd Baraka Khān,

was by no means lenient with abusers of intoxicants or with other undisciplined city dwellers. However, as a rather even-tempered man he lacked Baybars's fervor in fighting symptoms of social ills and he never waged a war against wine. Compared to Baybars', his measures were half-hearted. Moreover, Qalāwūn was pragmatic enough to decide, on one occasion, to suspend the prohibition and reintroduce the wine tax.[182] In fact his own son and immediate successor, al-Ashraf Khalīl did not mind drinking.[183]

The first sultan to share at least a measure of Baybars's attitude towards alcohol was an-Nāṣir Muḥammad (693–694/1293–1294; 698–708/1299–1309; 709–741/1310–1341), another son of Qalāwūn. Although far from imitating Baybars's fervor in implementing anti-vice regulations, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad abhorred wine and drinking no less than Baybars.[184] This was manifested not so much in his fierce or persistent fight to implement prohibition measures, however, but in the sultan's severe persecution of those of his mamluks and officers who drank. The fate of the rank-and-file mamluks, on whom the sultan vented his rage, was particularly hard—the accusation of drinking usually brought a heavy beating with clubs, sometimes to death.[185]

But while an uncompromising foe of drinking if practiced by the mamluks, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad was not so uncompromising when principles were involved. When *raison d'état* intervened, the sultan was sufficiently open to arguments not only to permit, in 738/1337–8, one of the Coptic

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seems not to have avoided entertainment; see Shāfiʿ Ibn ʿAlī, *Al-Faḍl al-Maʾthūr min Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, in Lewicka, *Šāfiʿ Ibn ʿAlī's Biography*, 222.

[182] The only evidence of Qalāwūn's anti-vice and prohibition activity are some passages included in two (out of three) memoranda that the sultan wrote for his son and co-ruler, al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ; in the documents, Qalāwūn reminded his son to eliminate fees on forbidden activities, to punish the drunkards severely, to discipline the prostitutes, and to close the "halls of homosexuals;" see Axel Moberg, "Regierungspromemoria eines ägyptischen Sultans," in *Festschrift Eduard Sachau*, ed. Gotthold Weil (Berlin, 1915), 410–11; Paulina Lewicka, "What a King Should Care About: Two Memoranda of the Mamluk Sultan on Running the State's Affairs," *SAI* 6 (1998): 29.

Sultan Qalāwūn, although apparently not too tolerant for drunkards, was flexible enough to decide, in 680/1281, to tax wines and prostitution in Damascus and to establish a special *dīwān* to deal with the tax and its collection. Since the Islamic lawyers protested against the decision, after 20 days the sultan suspended the tax and ordered to spill wines. It was probably the only time when Qalāwūn took a prohibition measure; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIII, 311.

[183] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 376.

[184] See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 387, 534, where the chronicler maintains that an-Nāṣir Muḥammad abhorred drinking.

[185] Ibid., II/1, 230; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 73, 98. For the officers it was easier—they were beaten or punished and dismissed; see, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 176; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 114, 174.

Nile festivals (*ʿīd ash-shahīd* or the Festival of the Martyr) to be celebrated with a lot of alcohol, but also to collect taxes imposed on wine sales for the occasion.[186] Moreover, he was flexible enough to turn a blind eye on the existence of a huge Armenian-Frankish "speakeasy" in the middle of Islamic Cairo, because "that was what the policy required due to the agreement between him and the kings of the Franks."[187] So much so, that when a certain amir whose mamluks were said to drink wine in the Armenian-Frankish place complained about it to the sultan, the latter, apparently unmoved, dismissed the complaint saying: "Oh, Ḥājj . . ., if you do not like your neighbors, then just move somewhere else."[188]

This, however, does not mean that the anti-wine operations carried out during the long era of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad were limited to the few measures which he himself introduced.[189] Sometimes it was his officers who, trying to show initiative and zeal, implemented various prohibition regulations. These activities, carried out by local (even if powerful) officials were rather limited in scale and importance.[190] Much more meaningful were the measures implemented by sultan Baybars II al-Jāshnakīr, regnal

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[186] Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 69. For a detailed description of the festival celebrations see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/1, 565–7; see also Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 265, 267.

[187] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 641.

[188] Ibid., *Sulūk*, II/3, 641. For more on the amir who had a house next to the Armenian-Frankish colony of Khizānat al-Bunūd, and on the place itself, see below, p. 539.

[189] The prohibition measures introduced by an-Nāṣir Muḥammad probably included not much more than abolishing the tax on wine on one occasion in 714/1314–15 (see Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 73) and pouring out the wine-makers' merchandise and burning hashish in 724/1324 (see Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 116). Some years earlier, in 720/1320, the sultan, apparently in order to imitate steps undertaken by Ilkhanid *khān* Abū Saʿīd, ordered his governors in Syria to abolish taxes on wine, close *khānāt*, and call on the prostitutes to repent (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 211). An-Nāṣir Muḥammad's order to smash thousands of wine jars in the Shubra area in 736/1336 seems to have had nothing to do with fighting vice; the decision was meant to be a punishment for amir Bashtāk who appropriated and pressed the load of grapes the proceeds of which was to supply the sultan's treasury; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 400–1.

[190] In 723/1322–3 and 724/1323–4 respectively, the sultan's appointees in Alexandria and Cairo started their functions as prefects by pouring out the local stock of wine and prohibiting its sale. The measures were apparently meant to prove both the adherence to Islam of the two amirs and their power; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 250 and 256. Also amir Tankiz, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's governor-general in Syria, is said to have managed to eliminate (at some point between 714/1314 and 740/1339–40) "prostitutes, *khānāt* and *khammārāt*" from Damascus and its provinces; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 510. For the discussion on the terms "*khānāt*" and "*khammārāt*" and the institutions behind them see above, pp. 511–13. For details on Tankiz al-Ḥusāmī and his career see Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 69–72. The above-mentioned operations do not include measures implemented by Baybars al-Jāshnakīr in Cairo that are discussed below.

name al-Muẓaffar, who, having interrupted an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign in 708/1309, apparently needed some momentous success to validate his otherwise poorly justified takeover and gain a dose of popular support. Almost immediately, orders were written to Damascus to give up the tax on wine on the Syrian littoral and to pour out the wine stock in the area.[191] The message confirming successful elimination of all the "taverns" (*khammārāt*) in Syria pleased the sultan so much that he at once decided to order similar steps to be taken in Egypt. The mass scale hunt for presumed wine keepers was paralleled by controlled looting and devastation to which the city's populace was more or less officially encouraged, and which finally dismayed the Mamluk officers.[192]

True, the spectacular and propagandist character of the undertaking was premeditated, but the successful demonstration of power and religiousness, however needed by the new sultan, was not the only motive behind his unconditional prohibition orders of 708/1309. In fact, Baybars al-Jāshnakīr had been known for his determined attitude long before he became a ruler. His record as a defender of Islamic values and a fighter against vice is remarkable enough[193] to imply that the 708/1309 operation was not only politically useful, but also manifested his personal aversion to alcohol as the blameworthy symptom of depravity.

Of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's eight sons who ruled the state between 741/1341 and 762/1361, at least three did not share their teetotaler father's attitude.[194] Nor did they intend to persecute the mamluks for drinking. The first of them to assume the sultanate was al-Manṣūr Abū Bakr (741–

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[191] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 52.

[192] Ibid., II/1, 53–4; for the more detailed discussion of the incident see below, pp. 535–6.

[193] As one of the two most powerful Mamluk amirs during the early sultanate of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Baybars al-Jāshnakīr was responsible, often jointly with amir Salār, for taking a number of measures meant to strengthen Islam and to eliminate vice. In most cases anti-Christian in character, these measures included issuing, in 700/1301, directives against Jews and Christians. These directives re-enacted the sumptuary laws originally defined in the so-called "pact of 'Umar;" see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/3, 912–13, 914–15; idem, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 404–5; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, VIII, 133–4. Cf. the discussion in Little, "Coptic Conversion," 554–6. Forbidding the Copts, partly for "safety reasons" and partly to prevent various depravities (such as wine drinking and immoral behavior of women), to hold one of their annual Nile festivals known as *ʿīd ash-shahīd* in 702/1303, was also a part of such measures; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/3, 941–2; cf. Little, "Coptic Conversion," 558. And so was prohibiting, in 706/1306–7, pleasure boats to cross the Cairene Ḥākimī Canal. This was because of countless sins committed on board, wine drinking by unveiled women included; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 29.

[194] Ānūk, one of sultan an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's sons who never managed to attain the royal power, did not refrain from drinking; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 492.

742/1341). He was so much addicted to entertainment and wine drinking in the company of his favored amirs and mamluks that he soon scandalized and disgusted the high-ranking officers. The latter had served his father earlier and were not accustomed to the sight of a drunken ruler.[195] Al-Malik al-Kāmil Shaʿbān (746–747/1345–1346), another son of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was no better; in fact, he managed to outdo his brother in ill reputation. He was defined by historians as "one of the worst rulers as far as injustice and immorality were concerned. During his days the country was ruined because of his passion for entertainment and adherence to the drinking places and his fondness of singers,"[196] apart from other condemnable practices of his. But he was fair: a drunkard himself, he also allowed the Royal Mamluks to follow his example and "make a tavern [*ḥāna*] of the convent [*khanqa*] in Siryāqūs."[197] An-Nāṣir Ḥasan (748–752/1347–1351; 755–762/1354–1361), yet another son and successor of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, shared his brothers' inclinations: he "liked fun and music, and tended to drink wine, to love beautiful lady singers, and to listen to instruments."[198] Their style was continued by the brothers' nephew, al-Manṣūr Muḥammad (762–764/1361–1363). Like his uncles, he immersed himself completely in drinking and listening to music and singing, which so distracted him from state issues that his two-year sultanate was reported to have been "nothing but a name."[199]

Little is known about the attitude of the remaining sultans from an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's lineage. Of the two prohibition operations recorded in the last decades of the Nāṣirid dynasty, one took place during the reign of al-Manṣūr ʿAlī (778–783/1377–1381), and the other during the second reign of the last Baḥrī sultan, al-Malik aṣ-Ṣāliḥ al-Manṣūr Ḥājjī (783–784/1381–1382 and 791–792/1389–1390). In both cases the operation involved raiding the houses of Christians and routine pouring out the contents of wine

[195] Whatever the true share of the officers' political ambitions in the subsequent deposition of Abū Bakr, the chroniclers insist it was the young sultan's unstately conduct and his unbearable drinking frolics that pushed them to carry out the coup; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 567–8; Ibn Taghrī Birdī *Nujūm*, X, 12.

[196] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 140.

[197] In 746/1345 the Royal Mamluks, while in Siryāqūs, dishonored themselves with wine drinking, cavorting with prostitutes, riding drunk by night, robbing travelers, and raping women; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 689; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 122. On the sultan's attitude see also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 710; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 124, 140.

[198] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 579, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 200.

[199] When finally removed from power and imprisoned in the Citadel, al-Manṣūr Muḥammad was apparently allowed to continue his way of life and was able "not to sober up day and night;" see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I, 592–3.

jugs.[200] The two sultans' personal attitude towards prohibition as well as their commitment to implementing its measures are, however, difficult to establish.

The fact that the Mamluks originated from the steppes of Russia and Central Asia was once used as an explanation of their alcohol addiction.[201] It so happens, however, that a sultan's origin did not make a real difference. Of the five Baḥrī sultans who had more or less impressive drinking record, all were Egypt-born descendants of former rulers. Which does not mean, of course, that other sultans of the dynasty, be it those of steppe origin, or Egyptian-born ones, refrained from drinking. Their attitude was not, however, commented on by chroniclers. Of the three confirmed Baḥrī teetotalers, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, born in Egypt, was an avowed foe of drinking mamluks rather than an unyielding fighter for prohibition. Aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars, the first of the dynasty to be a true enemy of alcohol and vice, originated directly from the Eurasian steppes. His namesake, Baybars II al-Jāshnakīr was most probably of Circassian origin.

Compared to the series of sultans who reigned as the so-called Baḥrī or Turkish dynasty, the subsequent series, known as Burjī or Circassian dynasty, included a significantly higher proportion of rulers who were not born in Egypt. The ratio of the drinking to non-drinking Egyptian-born Baḥrīs is not dramatically different from the proportion of the drinking Central Asian-born Circassians to the non-drinking ones. But the Circassians, abstainers or fun-loving, seem to have done things with a flourish and, in a way, with more carelessness than the Baḥrīs—or at least their stories portray them this way. Aẓ-Ẓāhir Barqūq (784–791/1382–1389; 792–801/1390–1399), a Circassian and the first of the Circassian series of sultans, not only added "nothing to the glory of Egypt" but also contributed to the observation that "the last fifty years of the eighth century [the fourteenth century C.E.] were indeed lamentable."[202] Neglecting the state administration and disregarding foreign affairs, he dedicated himself to inter-mamluk strife, an activity that involved plotting against some of

[200] The first of the two operations was carried out in 781/1379–80 by amir Baraka who raided the houses of the Copts and poured out the wine which he found in there; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, 358. In the course of the second operation, which took place in 791/1389, the houses of the Christian (?) prisoners were raided and the confiscated jugs of wine were broken below the Citadel; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 635.

[201] Ashtor, "Diet," 162.

[202] *EI2*, I, "Barḳūḳ" by G. Wiet.

them and socializing with others. His socializing turned into fraternizing, which often led to drinking bouts.[203]

The banquet the sultan held in 800/1398—a year preceding his death—to celebrate the victory in polo game over one of his officers, went down in history as a truly disreputable event. Apart from the enormous quantities of food that were presented in the tents pitched in the Cairo Hippodrome, equally enormous quantities of drinks, both soft and alcoholic, were served. The original idea of Barqūq was to spend the day—apparently one of many—with his amirs and mamluks, and give himself to drinking. Accordingly, at dawn he rode down from the Citadel in order to realize his design.

The versions of what happened next vary slightly; most importantly for the present context, he decided to keep the Hippodrome open for the people and, when the crowd became too dense, he left the place, letting the populace snatch away what remained of food and drink. Since, however, the drink included alcoholic beverages, the day was recorded as "a day of ignominy and horridness, a day in which intoxicants were permitted and a day in which people did not try to hide abominable and sinful behavior which was practiced in the unprecedented degree. "From this day on," as the chronicler maintains, "the forbidden things were abused in Egypt, and the sense of shame diminished."[204]

Considering his father's attitude, one should hardly be surprised that an-Nāṣir Faraj (801–808/1399–1405; 808–815/1405–1412), Barqūq's son and successor, did not prove to be a paragon of Islamic morale or of statesmanlike behavior. Moreover, he probably even surpassed Barqūq in drinking episodes. One of his apparently customary drinking bouts held in the company of his amirs and *khāṣṣakiyya* mamluks[205] almost cost him his life. Having become drunk, the sultan jumped into the pool and, when some of the group jumped after him, "he swam with them and played around, having forgot his dignity."[206] One of the officers, Azbak al-Ashqar, started

[203] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XI, 381; on Barqūq's addiction to alcohol see also above, chapter VI.1. "Drinks of the Mamluks," pp. 485–6.

[204] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, 902; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 81; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 501. It seems that during Barqūq's reign one significant operation against wine was undertaken. Carried on in 791/1389 by amir Yalbughā an-Nāṣirī, a rival of sultan Barqūq, and probably without the consent of the latter, it resulted in raiding the districts where wine was being sold, and smashing of 5,000 wine jugs in the Rumayla Square; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 410.

[205] *Khāṣṣakiyya* were an elite corps of young Royal Mamluks who served in the Citadel as the sultan's bodyguards and pages.

[206] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 329; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 733.

to sink him, and it was only thanks to another's fast reaction that the sultan survived. Nevertheless, the event was said to be the reason of the short interruption of his sultanate in 808/1405.[207] His alcoholism did not stop him, however, from allowing—or ordering—the show of destroying all the wine-stock and production facilities (apart from the church demolition) in the Shubra area. By so doing, he not only ruined the last mainstay of the Egyptian wine-industry, but also put an end to the prosperity of its Christian population who lived off winemaking.[208] Al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (815–824/1412–1421), a Circassian mamluk of Barqūq's and successor of his son an-Nāṣir Faraj, remained "wholeheartedly dedicated to drinking," too—and this despite the fact that his master, although not a teetotaler himself, apparently hated his mamluk's habit and repeatedly rebuked and beat him for it.[209]

But since neither the origin nor the Cairene household of the future ruler mattered, sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (825–842/1422–1438), also an ethnic Circassian and a mamluk of fun-loving Barqūq, managed to remain an example of piety—at least as far as food and drink were concerned. He never touched wine, and he also fasted regularly and frequently.[210] During his reign, at least three operations against intoxicants were undertaken. In 831/1427–8, the sultan ordered to pour out the wine stock and burn hashish. Both were to be prohibited definitely, but the prohibition apparently did not work, because a year later the order was renewed. This time wine cellars and houses of sin were successfully raided and demolished, and it was said that "about 10,000 wine jars were broken, so that a pond of wine flowed in the Rumayla Square."[211] A similar number of wine jars were reportedly broken ten years later, in 841/1437, when, probably in connection with the new wave of plague that reached Egypt that year, the sultan

[207] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XII, 329; for other drinking episodes of sultan Faraj see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XIII, 100, 126, 137, 152. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 801, 814 (when the drunk sultan could hardly sit on horseback). As Ibn Iyās noted in concluding remarks of his biographical note of sultan Faraj, the latter "drank days and nights, and did not sober up, so much so that the price of grapes increased in his days, because such quantities of it were pressed [for must];" Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 822.

[208] The event took place in 803/1401; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, I/2, 595; see also above, p. 498.

[209] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XIV, 1, 65.

[210] Ibid., XV, 108.

[211] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 122. Rumayla was a square below the Citadel (Ibn Iyās spells it Ramla; now Maydān Salāḥ ad-Dīn).

ordered a raid on the houses of Jews and Christians located in various quarters of the city so that all what they had of wine jars be broken.[212]

Barsbāy's indirect successor, sultan aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (842–857/1438–1453), also a Circassian and also a mamluk of Barqūq, was even more pious than Barsbāy and, moreover, seemed to have masterminded and implemented a kind of moral revolution in the mid-fifteenth-century Cairo. Suffused with religious zeal, he not only refrained from all forbidden things and pleasures such as drinking, adultery, and pederasty, but he also hated those who did not mind these practices. "In his days the world was all quiet, free of turmoil and war expeditions,"[213] therefore it was probably more than natural that he approached the problem with determination and persistence.

With aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's taking over the sultanate, all sinful practices, music and drinking included, were apparently wiped out.[214] As was the case with an-Nāṣir Muḥammad a century earlier, Mamluk officers, soldiers and state officials who had a weakness for drinking became again the object of the sultan's displeasure. The effect of aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's disciplining activities was that many "improved and stopped drinking, out of their fear of him."[215] Some started to fast regularly, some went on a pilgrimage, others gave up their previous lives, still others built mosques. Obviously not all were able to convert to abstinence immediately but a chronicler could say that "there was no one left in his state who would drink intoxicating beverages except for very few, and if they did, they did it secretly and were so much scared that they trembled upon hearing a whistling man."[216] As one banqueter of the time put it, "this state represented Death as far as destruction of pleasures and of good days was concerned."[217] Under such circumstances, drinking could not be fun. But, in fact, it was not that bad. The transformation of the mamluks' and officers' attitudes, deep as it

[212] On the same occasion, an action against prostitutes was also taken; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 184, and a poet's interesting comment quoted therein.

[213] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 348; also idem, *Al-Manhal aṣ-Ṣāfī wa-l-Mustawfī baʿda-l-Wāfī*, Cairo 1985–1999, IV, 298.

[214] According to how Ibn Taghrī Birdī relates it, aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's sultanate marked the end of the epoch of the previous rulers. This was the epoch when "walking and music were enjoyed, when Būlāq, Birkat ar-Raṭlī and other places [of this kind] were founded, and when every musician who had an instrument was coming to Cairo;" Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 348. All what Ibn Iyās says in this context is that aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq "hated those who drank wine and fornicated;" Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 300.

[215] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XV, 348–9.

[216] Ibid., XV, 458.

[217] Ibid., XV, 458.

possibly appeared to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, the chronicler, proved to be only a temporary phenomenon.

As for the remaining sultans of the Mamluk state's decadent years, it is rather difficult to define their attitude unequivocally. Opinions concerning al-Ashraf Īnāl (857–866/1453–1460) are divided: some historians maintain he was "absorbed by pleasures and inclined towards wine drinking,"[218] while others say that he in fact refrained from intoxicants and forbidden things—his possible fondness for handsome youths notwithstanding.[219] Whether al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (873–901/1468–1495) drank or not, is not clear, either. It was, however, commonly understood that cases of adultery, sodomy, and wine drinking were frequent enough during his reign to become the reason behind the recurrences of the plague.[220] The attitude of Qāytbāy's son, an-Nāṣir Muḥammad (901–904/1495–1498), is also unclear. Judging upon an incident that occurred in Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square when the sultan was leaving the place after the evening prayer, he was not too permissive as far as alcohol was concerned. But the record of how he ordered, without an inquiry, to cleave a passerby in half just because he was told that "the man was drunk" proved the ruler's injustice or bad temper rather than his piousness.[221]

As for al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī (906–922/1500–1516), he was not too principled. He did issue at least two regulations banning wine, *būza*, hashish, and prostitutes, but both orders seem to have been related more to the waves of plague that appeared in Egypt than to his sense of religious integrity.[222] At the same time, al-Ghūrī was open or careless enough to nominate—to the chronicler's despair—a converted Frankish dealer of Cretan wine to the rank of amir of ten, and made him the army commander.[223] He was also careless or tolerant enough not to react when certain amir rented the land on ar-Raṭlī Pond and sown it over with hashish, which made people go there in waves to watch the growing herb with delight.[224]

[218] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 313.
[219] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 159.
[220] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, III, 287.
[221] Ibid., III, 397.
[222] The bans were issued in 910/1504–5 and 919/1513; ibid., IV, 76–7, 303.
[223] "Which was," as Ibn Iyās put it, "one of the mistakes of the time;" ibid., IV, 466.
[224] Ibid., IV, 156 (the annal for 915/1509).

Since the approach of the medieval Egyptian rulers to the issue of alcohol does not conform to any clear pattern, not many generalizations can be formed. The most obvious one is that for over half a millennium of Cairo's history, the paragons of temperance and avowed foes of alcohol were rather innumerous among countless caliphs and sultans who resided in the city. Al-Ḥākim and Saladin represent those who ruled the country before the Mamluk era; as for the 250-year-long era of the Mamluks, there were three dedicated prohibitionists among sultans out of the total of forty seven Mamluk rulers of both "dynasties."

The absence of a consistent policy regarding the question of alcohol has one particularly intriguing aspect. It is that after centuries of such an uneven policy (or despite it), the ideas of prohibition and abstinence managed after all to supplant traditional habits and to make the Cairenes form new standards. This long, slow, and uneven process of transformation appears to have had its formative moment at some point in the Mamluks' epoch, or, more precisely, between the reign of aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars and the end of the reign of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad, that is between 670s/1270s and the beginning of 740s/1340s.

Out of these seven decades the year 709/1309–10 attracts particular attention, as there are reasons to regard the prohibition operation undertaken that year by sultan al-Muẓaffar Baybars as the turning point in the process of transforming of the Cairenes' attitudes towards wine. Judging by the details of the event as preserved in al-Maqrīzī's chronicle,[225] the style in which the operation was performed differed from other incidents of this kind. Some of these details may have been more typical for the ways of the past; most of them, however, seem to have been symptomatic of the forthcoming trends.

First, amir Sayf ad-Dīn ash-Shaykhī, the officer appointed by the sultan to carry out the procedure, was not only instructed to disregard the social class, position, and connections of the suspect wine drinkers, but also was given unlimited authority as far as the means were concerned.[226] In effect, the plundering was officially allowed, possibly for the first time on such

[225] The account of the operation was written down by an as yet unidentified chronicler and rewritten by al-Maqrīzī; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*; see II/1, 53, n. 2.

[226] The order was indeed tough, for amir ash-Shaykhī, apart from being instructed "not to skip any house in Cairo or al-Fusṭāṭ" where wine jars could presumably be hidden, was also ordered not to respect the solidarity bonds which he was supposed to share with his *khushdāshiyya* comrades. But the amir apparently did not cherish this kind of scruples: one of his victims was amir ʿAlāʾ ad-Dīn Mughulṭāy al-Masʿūdī, the high-ranking Mamluk officer and, at the same time, ash-Shaykhī's Burjī comrade; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 54.

an occasion. The second remarkable point is that before the terror started, few reasonable persons had been willing to contribute to the success of this kind of operation or to cooperate with its executors. In 709/1309–10 refusal was still possible: when the fervent amir ash-Shaykhī, having called into his presence the prefect of Cairo, the city commanders, and the owners of the apartment buildings (*aṣḥāb al-irbaʿ*),[227] interrogated them about the places where the wine was hidden, none of them answered. Only after heavy beating with clubs they revealed the names of those who pressed grapes or stored wine.

Third, the procedure was applied, as already indicated, to the entire city population and no social group or class was excluded. In practical terms, this meant that the houses of suspected officers, scribes, soldiers, and merchants were raided regardless of the rank of their owners. The break-in, usually unexpected, was made by ash-Shaykhī's mamluks, assisted by carpenters and construction workers hired to look for underground wine caches and to destroy them. The houses of Jews and Christians were raided, too, and all their wine was routinely poured out. Interestingly, in Cairo of 709/1309–10 the Muslims and the *dhimmī*s could still be equally guilty as far as wine storing was concerned, and be equally liable to punishment. In 709/1309–10, Jews and Christians could still be spared the fate of being the main (if not the sole) target of the prohibition operation, despite the sultan al-Muẓaffar Baybars was not famous for his leniency towards the *dhimmī*s.[228]

What seems to be particularly noteworthy is that the chronicler, while noting down the details of the event, stressed the tension which the operation caused among the Cairenes who, it seems, had never before experienced a similar situation. With their names made known publicly and defamed, their houses and life's work plundered by soldiers and the populace, their life in danger, many of them surrendered to the atmosphere of accusation, suspicion, and fear. Like their European contemporaries hunted by the Inquisition, they too "started to point one at another, this way taking revenge on their enemies."[229] No longer playing hide-and-seek with the mighty officials, as was the case in al-Ḥākim's times, no longer protecting one another in the face of the persecuting officer, as was the

[227] For some details on *irbaʿ*, or apartment complexes with lodgings for rent, see above, pt. I, Introductory Essay: Medieval Cairo and its Inhabitants, pp. 21–2; and chapter I.3.A. "Technical preconditions," p. 92.

[228] See above, p. 527, n. 193.

[229] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 54.

case a few days earlier during the interrogation carried out by amir ash-Shaykhī. Their desire to be on the safe side took over.

The prohibition of al-Muẓaffar Baybars, meaningful as it might have been for the transformation of the Cairenes' views on wine, was not, however, the key factor behind the change of attitudes. Neither were the anti-vice measures taken by the Mamluk governments before him. In all likelihood, timing was of essence here. The second half of the thirteenth century was the time when the Mamluks, having taken the power from the Ayyubids, became the main Muslim player in the Near Eastern arena. Under the leadership of sultans Baybars I and Qalāwūn the counter-Crusade acquired a new political, religious, and military dimension, the development which soon made Outremer face the inevitable end. Although the days of the Crusader states were numbered, many still believed that a disaster could be averted. The rescue was to come from somewhere far in the east, where the kingdom of mythical prester John reportedly lied. Not surprisingly, when in the second half of the thirteenth century the Ilkhanid Mongols invaded the Near East with the destruction of Islam in mind, many Christians believed that the hordes of Hülagü Khān were the long-awaited army of prester John coming to save the Holy Land.

Having razed Baghdad to the ground and eliminated the Abbasid caliphate, the Mongols moved west. Before the Mamluks finally managed to push them away, the Mongols had oppressed Syria and planned the invasion of Egypt as their next step. Although not Christians themselves, the uncompromising *ilkhāns* Hülagü and Abaqa were favorably disposed towards Christianity, personally and politically. What was most important, they shared anti-Islamic views with Christians. In their conquest of the Muslim Near East, the Mongols cooperated with, or were supported by, the rulers of Georgia, Cilician Armenia, and prince Bohemund VI of Antioch. They maintained friendly relations with Byzantium and exchanged numerous embassies with the papacy in an attempt to convince Western Christianity to join them in an anti-Muslim alliance.[230]

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[230] The Mongol-European alliance eventually never came true. For more on the Mongol-European and Mongol-Frankish relations see, for example, Jean Richard, "The Mongols and the Franks," *Journal of Asian History* 3 (1969): 45–57; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "Ghazan, Islam and Mongol Tradition: A View from the Mamlūk Sultanate," *BSOAS* 59/1 (1996): 1–10; Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the West: 1221–1410* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005); idem, "The Crusades of 1239–41 and Their Aftermath," *BSOAS* 50/1 (1987): 32–60; idem, "The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260," *The English Historical Review* 95/376 (1980): 481–513.

To the Mamluks, the Mongols posed a threat much more serious then the Franks ever had.[231] To the Muslim inhabitants of Syria who went through hell during Hülagü's and Abaqa's campaigns, the Mongols meant havoc, slaughter, and unprecedented terror. The local Christians, on the other hand, seemed to have sighed with relief when under the Mongol occupation. If Ibn Kathīr is correct in his relation of events, the Damascene Christians, apparently feeling protected by the Mongols, some of whom were Nestorians themselves, not only enjoyed a moment of relative religious freedom but went so far as to provoke and harass their Muslim neighbors.[232] New sources of tension appeared easily. Not surprisingly, as soon as its protectors were gone, the Christian community of Damascus paid the price for daring to vent its anti-Muslim sentiments.[233] The Near Eastern Christians, traditionally perceived by the Muslims as pro-Byzantine or pro-Frankish, now also came to be considered pro-Mongol schemers.

The second half of the thirteenth century was the time when Muslims' anti-Christian emotions, relatively weak in the previous century, grew faster, and probably deeper, than ever. It follows that the end of the thirteenth and fourteenth century were the times when "Islamic" more and more often meant "anti-Christian," for the simple reason that "Christian" was so often synonymous with "anti-Islamic." Stimulated by the enthusiasm that exploded after the recapture of Tripoli[234] and then, finally, of Acre, this phenomenon, interwoven with the idea of promoting Islamic values and rejecting what was non-Islamic, gathered momentum.

In reference to the issue of wine this meant that measures taken against the wine business—those days an exclusively Christian domain (and, to some degree, also Jewish)[235]—were meant to promote values that were

[231] For the detailed study of the Mamluk-Ilkhanid relations see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); also idem, "Mongol Raids into Palestine (AD 1260 and 1300)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1987): 236–55.

[232] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 232–3 (the annal for 658/1260).

[233] The Damascene Christians were to pay "the price of seven months of relative religious freedom" immediately after the battle of ʿAyn Jālūt (Ramadan 658/September 1260), in which their Mongol protectors had been defeated by the Mamluk army; see Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 45–6 and the references therein. For the reaction of the Damascene Muslims see also below, p. 541 n. 251, and the references therein.

[234] The unprecedented massacre of the population of Tripoli that followed the recapture of the city from the Crusaders by Qalāwūn's army (688/1289) could be symptomatic of the Muslims' emotions of that time.

[235] The measures taken against the wine business affected the Jews, too. In the case of Jewish dealers, however, the harassment and repressive operations taken against them generally did not involve inter-communal hatred, nor were they a part of a large-scale

as Islamic as they were anti-Christian. This also means that the question of wine became an inherent element of the general anti-Christian atmosphere and, consequently, of the Mamluk state's oppressive policy towards local Christians. But it was not the Mamluk rulers with whom this approach originated; rather, it was zealous preachers, fervent amirs, and the enthusiastic population at large. Given a chance to have their moment in history, they started to set the tone for the atmosphere of the fourteenth-century Cairo, as well as for all of the Islamic Near East.[236]

The beginning of the fourteenth century coincided with the activity of Ibn Taymiyya (661–728/1263–1328) whose unfriendly attitude towards infidels and dissenters did not allow him to pass over the issue of Christian wine. While in Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya himself cruised local wine cellars on at least one occasion in 699/1299–1300. Accompanied by his comrades, he broke wine jars and reprimanded those whom he caught on the spot.[237] Although he probably did not have a chance to act this way in Egypt, the spirit of his teachings, combined with his unquestionable influence, must have mattered in Cairo. The fourteenth century was also the century of theologians like Ibn al-Ḥājj, a Malikite religious scholar from the Maghreb who resided in Cairo. His teachings, while promoting the proper Islamic behavior, were also meant to discourage the Muslims from contacting the Christians who, apart from other sins, were guilty of drinking and wine-dealing.[238] It was also the time of theologians such as al-Asnawī, a *ḥadīth* teacher and the head of the Egyptian Shāfiʿites, who held that Christians were responsible for spreading moral laxity and wine drinking and for the seduction of Muslim women. And who taught—in the spirit that many centuries later was to become the core of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's double *tawḥīd*—that "acceptance of unbelief is in itself unbelief."[239]

inter-communal conflict. For general remarks regarding the status of Jews and the status of Christians under Islam in the Middle Ages see *Cultures of the Jews*, vol. 2, *Diversities of Diaspora*, ed. David Biale (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 15–24.

[236] One of the results of their activity in Egypt was the fact that "as a result of the loss of their livelihood and the destruction of their churches, the Copts begun to disappear into the Muslim population of Egypt;" Little, "Coptic Conversion," 568.

[237] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 12 (the annal for 699/1299–1300). Cf. the reports on *khān* Abū Saʿīd, the Mongol Ilkhanid ruler who in 720/1320 and 721/1321 was spilling wines, killing those who stored wine despite the ban, eliminating houses of sin and *khānāt*, and destroying churches in his country, apparently to the amusement of the Muslim population; see Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 100, 102; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, IX, 309; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 211. Minor differences between their reports notwithstanding, all the chroniclers mention *khān* Abū Saʿīd and his operation with clear satisfaction and esteem.

[238] Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 51; IV, 94.

[239] For discussion on al-Asnawī's teachings see Perlmann, "Notes," 851, 860, 861. Not all Islamic scholars were as uncompromising, though. Shams ad-Dīn an-Nawājī, a ninth/

But the theologians, influential as they were, were not alone in promoting the new currents in Islam. The fourteenth century was also the century of officials such as amir Āl Malik al-Jūkandār, a Mamluk officer who vented his long-cherished hatred towards wine and Christians as soon as he was promoted to the post of viceroy by an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's successor.[240] As viceroy, he first cracked down on what he hated most—namely, the Frankish-Armenian semi-legal "speakeasy" known as Khizānat al-Bunūd and located at the back of the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn square in Cairo, which made it his neighbor. The establishment was accused of wine-, pig meat-, and prostitution-business, as well as of depravity of every kind.[241] After the people's spontaneous initiative to destroy the building in 743/1342–3 had failed,[242] the following year it was surrounded on amir Āl Malik's order and, with the help of the local populace and the riffraff, leveled to the ground. This action was preceded by capturing the dwellers and attendants of the place and smashing wine jars that were found in the building.[243] "It was a great day, like the day of entering Acre or Tripoli, so horrible were sins committed there,"[244] commented the chronicler contentedly.

A curious detail of the story is that more or less at the same time amir Āl Malik also ordered the removal of a group of Frankish prisoners who lived in the Cairo Citadel and smashing the jars of wine reportedly found with them. Both groups of Franks were then moved to the neighborhood of the mausoleum of Sayyida Nafīsa, somewhere between the mosque of Ibn Ṭulūn and al-Fusṭāṭ (one wonders, by the way, how the Franks earned their living having been moved to the Sayyida Nafīsa area). Having cracked down on the Franks and Armenians, amir Āl Malik continued chasing and punishing wine sellers and their customers—he even promised

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fifteenth-century Cairene theologian and a *ḥadīth* teacher, could be open enough to compile two collections of wine poetry and anecdotes, his faith and career notwithstanding, and avoided moralistic teachings in his works; cf. Heine, *Weinstudien*, xvii.

[240] That is sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl.

[241] Moreover, a church was said to have been located there; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/1, 219. Cf. the accusations referring to an-Nashw, inspector of an-Nāṣir Muḥammad's private treasury and a convert from Christianity, in whose place 4,000 jars of wine were reportedly found; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/2, 482. See also above, pt. I, chapter II.2. "Meat," p. 178, and chapter II.3. "Fish," pp. 221–2.

[242] For report on the plundering of Khizānat al-Bunūd in 743/1342–3 see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 622.

[243] For Khizānat al-Bunūd and amir Āl Malik's operation against it see also above, p. 508, and the references therein.

[244] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 641. Whatever the true course of events was, the accusations against the Franks, and the very emotional tone of the account itself, may in this case reflect the anti-Christian current that seems to have prevailed in the eighth/fourteenth-century Cairo.

an award to anybody who would bring a drunk man carrying a wine jug. Prompted, people readily lay in wait for drunkards in every street, but the hunt did not prove successful: only one drunken soldier was caught.[245] This was not what the determined viceroy hoped for. In a few days a larger-scale operation was ordered. This time the toll was satisfying: the viceroy "seized many of wine drinkers and wine sellers in the Shubra al-Khiyam and Minyat as-Sīrj area, and from the boats and houses." Then he "lashed them, their bodies naked, uncovered their heads, spilled wine on them, and displayed them."[246]

The atmosphere was encouraging, and very soon "a group of pious *faqīr*s" from a village north of Cairo, possibly prompted by news of the "victory" over the Frankish-Armenian ghetto, rebuked their Christian neighbors for selling wine. After one of the rebuking *faqīr*s had beaten a Christian and drawn blood, Christians gathered near the local mosque and beat the *faqīr*s after the Friday prayer. Muslims then repaid the Christians with the same, and moved to plunder their houses, after which the plundering spread to Muslim houses. In effect, the entire village was destroyed.[247]

The records of the events clearly show that by the mid-fourteenth century a certain transformation of attitudes had already been completed. After the death of al-Ḥākim the Cairenes, or Egyptians in general, indulged in wine drinking and entertainment. After the death of Saladin, they not only bought up wine and grapes but, moreover, did not mind to drink with Christians in Ramadan. Now they enjoyed promoting prohibition and watched the hunt for drunkards in the city.

Interestingly, the Cairene Muslim mob, or the main factor of the anti-Christian disturbances and their driving force, was not as unambiguous in its attitude towards alcohol as it might have appeared. The same late medieval Cairene mob who readily smashed wine jars and enjoyed demolishing Christian wine-selling premises, did not seem to care about what exactly was wrong about the Christian wine, or about what was wrong

[245] Unfortunate enough, he was brought to the viceroy, who beat him and deprived him of his pay. The man who brought the soldier received some award (the event took place in 744/1343–4); see Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 88; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 646. From this time on, every now and then some "helpful citizens" brought to the viceroy individuals seized with a jar of wine, or led him to places dealing in alcohol and hashish. For records of such events see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II/3, 646–7, 667.

[246] Ibid., II/3, 646.

[247] Ibid., II/3, 656. The village, Minyat as-Sīrj, was probably the center of the wine business off which the whole Christian population of Shubra lived.

about drinking in general. In 721/1321 long and destructive Muslim-Christian violence swept across the city. In the course of the events a number of churches was demolished, their valuables were robbed, and nuns were captured. Some of the wine jars found in the sanctuaries were smashed on the spot. Other jars, however, were taken as booty, possibly to be smashed in some public place and in a more festive way. But in the end the jars were not broken: some of those who had a moment earlier participated in anti-Christian riots and demolition of churches, now did not mind getting drunk with the church wine they seized.[248] Apparently, their negative sentiment towards Christian wine had little to do with its sacramental meaning.[249] Moreover, this sentiment resulted more from their receptivity to provocation and incitement than from their deep belief in the superiority of Islamic abstinence. The city's populace, while mobilized and excited, did not care too much about the Islamic ban on alcohol consumption. When allowed to drink, the common people would still enjoy getting drunk, en masse and openly.[250]

All these events are perfect illustration of how wine was involved in the inter-communal tension of the time, and how it turned into a convenient pretext, ready to be used for religious and politico-religious purposes. Or, in other words, how wine fueled—or was used to fuel—mutual hatred and bitterness.[251] The Coptic Nile festivals, most of which disappeared in the fourteenth century, falling victim to the atmosphere of

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[248] Ibid., II/1, 217. It is probable that many medieval Egyptian churches, like some of those of the early twentieth century, had their own wine presses; cf. S.H. Leeder, *Modern Sons of the Pharaohs: A Study of Manners and Customs of the Copts of Egypt* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918; repr. 1973), 214.

[249] One should not, however, underestimate the significance of the use of wine for sacramental purposes in Christian ceremonies as a reason for Muslims' negative sentiment. Cf. al-Ḥākim's prohibition to use wine in the Mass by the Christians; al-Anṭākī, *Tārīkh*, 289.

[250] Cf. the infamous open-air Barqūq's party held three generations later; see above, p. 530.

[251] But the symptoms of inter-communal hatred, with wine as one of its hallmarks, reasons, and pretexts, were coming to the surface much earlier than the eighth/fourteenth century. In Syria, the tension must have been present long before 658/1260 when, following the Mongol occupation of Damascus, it was finally allowed to erupt. The local Christians, apparently in retaliation for the earlier oppressive behavior of the Muslims, and now under Mongol protection, marched along the city streets with a crucifix, insulting the Muslim population, sprinkling them, and the mosques, with wine, and shouting that Christianity was the only proper religion. As soon, however, as the Mongols withdrew from Damascus later the same year, Muslims took the revenge for the humiliation they had gone through. The Christians' houses were ravaged, some churches demolished and burnt, and a number of Christians killed. A few days later Damascene Jews experienced similar troubles; see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I/2, 425, 432; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIII, 232–4.

the times, too. Indeed, the customary practices of the five annual Coptic celebrations involved practices inconsistent with the Islamic law, the public sale and drinking of wine included. The festivals' earlier suspensions notwithstanding,[252] they survived both the Fatimid and the Ayyubid eras. But the pragmatic tolerance of the early Islamic rulers of Egypt was not shared by the rulers of the fourteenth century. Although in some cases the festivals were suspended as manifestations of the "reversal of social order" and a potential source of public violence[253]—if only for the quantities of wine sold and publicly drunk during the festivals—the Mamluks' fear of disturbances was but one side of the coin. The other was their urge, as some amirs phrased it on one occasion, to "manifest the practices of Islam."[254]

Contrary to what has been suggested, the fate of the Coptic Nile festivals was not a result of any premeditated designs of the Mamluks aimed at "suppressing the disruptive aspects of popular culture."[255] Nor were the Mamluks "external hegemonic conquerors" who intended to "impose their own cultural ideology on the conquered."[256] The Mamluk policy towards the disruptive aspects of the local Christian culture was, above all, an echo

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[252] The first to suspend some of the Coptic festivals was the Fatimid caliph al-ʿAzīz who, apparently as a part of his anti-Coptic measures, ordered the prohibition of the celebration of Epiphany (*ʿīd al-ghiṭās*) in 367/978. Caliph al-Ḥākim who first relaxed some earlier restraints, later took serious measures to tighten his grip—possibly due to the political turmoil caused by a series of bad Niles, food shortages, high prices etc. In effect, all Coptic popular celebrations were banned. Some years after al-Ḥākim's death, the ban was withdrawn. For details, see Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 260–1.

[253] Little, "Coptic Conversion," 558.

[254] See ibid., 555, where the author comments on Baybars al-Jāshnakīr and other amirs who "agreed with the [Maghribi] vizier, recognizing such a course to be of great benefit in manifesting the practices of Islam."

The celebration of Epiphany (*ʿīd al-ghiṭās*) that by the ninth/fifteenth century was no longer the great feast it used to be, seems to have come to an end in 841/1437, when sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy ordered the demolition of Dayr al-Maghṭas, a monastery to which the Copts made pilgrimages on the occasion of the festival; see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 183, and below, p. 545. The Festival of the Martyr (*ʿīd ash-shahīd*), suspended by aẓ-Ẓāhir Baybars, was then revived after some time, and again prohibited by Baybars al-Jāshnakīr (for "safety reasons"); after 36 years it was revived again by an-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 738/1337, and continued to be celebrated without an interruption until the year 755/1354. As for the Nawrūz festival, it continued to be celebrated until 780's/1370's, when sultan Barqūq banned its celebration. Partly because it was "Islamized," and partly because it was related to the land's prosperity, the day of the Nile Inundation (*wafāʾ an-Nīl/kasr al-Khalīj*) was the only festival to avoid the fate of the remaining Coptic celebrations. It was also the only one in whose rituals Mamluk authorities participated (albeit reluctantly) and added elements of their own military ceremonial; for details see Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 259–80.

[255] Lutfi, "Coptic Festivals," 272.

[256] Ibid., 254.

of general and common radicalization of Islam. True, the Mamluk rulers were not the *spiritus movens* of the tendency.[257] But they followed it and yielded to it, often against their own interests and inclinations. In this sense the Mamluks, by either following the spirit of the time or by using the mood of the times, contributed to reinforcing the inter-communal bitterness, of which the question of wine was, for some time, one of the constituting elements. But in the fourteenth century they did not have to put much effort to seek popular support for it. The Crusades and the religious propaganda designed to incite Muslims against the *dhimmī*s already did their work and in the fourteenth century anti-Christian sentiments among the Muslim population of Cairo, especially among the lower elements of society, was deep enough not to require encouragement.

Moreover, the tendency to promote Islam by suppressing what was non-Islamic within it, an idea for which the wine, both sinful and Christian, became a perfect target, was by no means an exclusively Egyptian phenomenon. In Syria, too, such things happened and Ibn Taymiyya ravaging the wine cellars in Damascus[258] was not an isolated example of this kind of activities. It is enough to remember the news about "wines and prostitutes being eliminated from the littoral and Tripoli" in 714/1314–15, an operation which was synchronized with "a mosque being built in every Christian village."[259] One can also remember an announcement issued in Damascus that promised an award to anybody who would find a drunk soldier, pull him down from his horse, take his clothes, and bring him to the viceroy's residence. Also here, like in Cairo, the popular response was positive. People, encouraged by the vision of receiving the promised bread, gladly blocked wine-makers' and grape pressers' premises.[260] One can also mention a grass roots initiative of 758/1356–7, when a group of people from the vicinity of the Damascene mosque, from mausoleum (*mashhad*) of ʿAlī and other areas, followed by a group of *faqīr*s and Maghrebians, headed for places accused of dealing in wine and hashish. Upon reaching

[257] The Mamluks, "except when they realized that to do so would constitute a threat to public order and stability," generally "left Dhimmis to their own devices" and were hesitant to take any action against the Copts unless they were prodded to do so;" Little, "Coptic Conversion," 557, 553.

[258] Cf. above, p. 538.

[259] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 85.

[260] Although it is not clear whether any soldier fell in the trap, the measurable result of the action was that the price of grapes decreased; see Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 252 (the annal for 752/1351–2).

the places, they "smashed many wine vessels, spilled what was inside them, and destroyed a lot of hashish."[261]

No doubt, in the fourteenth century the circumstances allowed for far less than in earlier times. Yet the following century proved to be even tougher, both for the wine dealers and their consumers. One reason for this was, undoubtedly, the policies of the devout sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy and of the even more devout aẓ-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq. But what made the times ever harder was the common conviction that the occurrence of natural disasters was caused by sinful behavior.[262] Ancient and timeless as it was, the belief was used to give the prohibition policy of the Mamluk state a new dimension. In the fifteenth century, the policy of demonstrating piousness by fighting wine business and depravity in order to prevent the work of the elements was practiced more frequently than ever before, regardless of the sultans' personal attitudes towards drinking and entertainment. But, in all fairness to the Mamluk rulers, such actions were in fact the only instrument one could use to oppose the waves of plague or the danger of Nile waters not rising high enough.

The only Baḥrī sultan to be forced by such considerations to ordain the spilling of wine was probably an-Nāṣir Ḥasan. Although not a teetotaler himself, he was desperate and helpless in the face of the Black Death

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[261] Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 269. In his *Sulūk*, al-Maqrīzī mentions amir Sūdūn min ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (d. 841/1438), a Mamluk governor of Damascus, who was to make a fortune from ownership of taverns (cf. Levanoni, "Food and Cooking," 220). According to al-Maqrīzī's account, Sūdūn founded in Damascus *khammārāt*, or wine-selling establishments (but also venues for prostitutes and youngsters, most probably meaning homosexuals), and franchised them in return for a monthly charge. The record provokes a number of comments. One is that other authors who discussed the career of amir Sūdūn (i.e. as-Sakhāwī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī) do not confirm the information that the amir participated in this kind of enterprise. Another question refers to al-Maqrīzī's remark that amir Sūdūn's way of making money was followed by other entrepreneurs, and that such a development was accepted without public protest. This could suggest that in the ninth/fifteenth-century Damascus one could easily make fortune from wine trade because wine-dealers' premises not only prospered but also enjoyed official and popular consent. True, such situation was not impossible; it was not, however, very likely, if one considers the non-permissive atmosphere of the eighth/fourteenth-century Damascus, and similar atmosphere prevailing in the eighth/fourteenth- and ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo. See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV, 1066–7. Many thanks to prof. Joseph Drory for inspiring comments regarding the issue.

[262] Nothing can probably better illustrate such an attitude than al-Maqrīzī's comment which ends the chronicler's account of the popularity of alcohol consumption that occurred in Cairo following the encouraging policy of al-Malik al-ʿAzīz ʿUthmān, son of Saladin "And the Almighty God's punishment occurred immediately: the increase of the Nile stopped below the usual level and the price of crops grew;" al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, I, 105; idem, *Sulūk*, I/1, 118–19.

offshoot of 748/1348 and its horrible death toll.[263] The Circassian sultans' records are much richer in this context. Thus, after the new wave of plague had reached Egypt in 841/1437, al-Ashraf Barsbāy first decided (apart from some other anti-vice measures) to demolish Dayr al-Maghṭas, a monastery to which the Copts made pilgrimages on the occasion of Epiphany (*ʿīd al-ghiṭās*) and which was a "scene of the indescribable sins."[264] Then, next month, his orders were to raid the houses of Jews and Christians all over Cairo and break all their wine amphorae.[265] Similar measures were taken by al-Ashraf Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī during the plague of 910/1504–5, when the sultan ordered his officials to raid the houses of the Christians, break the jugs of wine that were found there, and burn hashish and *būza* places. He also ordered to eliminate these intoxicants from daily life.[266] The order was repeated by al-Ghūrī during the plague of 919/1513.[267] The idea to make some fast pious moves to avert the calamity was not rejected even by such an alcohol addict as the Ottoman-Mamluk viceroy of Egypt, Khayr Bak (923–928/1517–1522) who, faced with the slowing rise of the Nile waters in 925/1519, issued the order to prohibit wine, hashish, *būza*, and prostitutes.[268]

Naturally enough, issuing such orders, aimed at demonstrating repentance, had to have its propagandist side-effects, such as strengthening the conviction of the Muslim population that the Christian and Jewish wine dealers were not only wrongdoers, but also the reason behind the disasters which made the whole country suffer. But it is difficult to assert whether such an anti-Christian and anti-Jewish overtone of the state prohibition policy could have a deep influence upon the city's population. With the majority of Cairo's Coptic population Islamized and the religiosity of its Muslim population radicalized, people did not need any added incentives to keep off the now unpopular and commonly despised habit of wine drinking. This aspect of the local ancient culture, once common, was practically extinct by the end of the Mamluk epoch, as was the local wine industry, once thriving.

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[263] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Nujūm*, X, 200.

[264] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 183, 184.

[265] The operation resulted in the destruction of some 10,000 jars of wine; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 183, 184.

[266] Ibid., IV, 76–7; also above, pp. 492, 533.

[267] Ibid., IV, 303; also above, pp. 492, 533.

[268] Ibid., V, 304.

In defiance of the generally permissive attitude of the rulers and of their frequently licentious lifestyle, the tougher option was favored by the population at large, rejecting what was ancient and Mediterranean and making room for what was newer and Islamic. Abstinence was not only taken seriously but "turned into a rage"[269] against those who dared to violate the prohibition. The attitudes that caliph ʿUmar tried to instill into the community at the very beginning of Islam were, partially at least, implemented in Cairo of the later Middle Ages. In the fifteenth century there was not much room left for leniency in the city. Nothing can probably illustrate the dramatic change in popular attitude better than the evolution of punishment inflicted on Ramadan drinkers in the opening and closing periods of the Cairene Middle Ages. A merchant caught drunk in one of the al-Fusṭāṭ caravansaries in Ramadan 415/1024 was simply arrested and incarcerated in the local police station prison. When four centuries later, in Ramadan 818/1415, a presumably drunk man was seized, he was beaten according to the rules of punishment for crimes committed against religion (*ḍuriba al-ḥadd*), and then displayed all over Cairo. But this was only the official part of the sentence. When he reached aṣ-Ṣalība (the "Main Street"), the mob finished the work: he was assaulted and killed and his body was burnt.[270]

The pressure of the government, of the religious circles and of the riffraff proved powerful enough to destroy the local viticulture and winemaking industry, and to make Egyptians significantly limit their wine consumption. Because, however, drinking habit dies particularly hard, the demand for alcoholic beverages could not be entirely eliminated. True, the shows of destroying thousands of wine jars in public places might have been enjoyable to the populace. But the sight of ponds of wasted wine flowing in the square below the Citadel and soaking into the ground was not dear to everybody. There were still Cairenes who would watch the developments with grief and sorrow and who, unable to act, could only sit and whisper bitterly:

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[269] Goitein, *Daily Life*, 253.

[270] For the event of 415/1024 see al-Musabbiḥī, *Akhbār Miṣr*, 63. For the record referring to Ramadan of 818/1415 see Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 24. See also ibid., IV, 62, where in the annal for 909/1503–4 (sultanate of Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī) Ibn Iyās narrates the story of a woman and four men who were caught in a garden while eating *mulūḥa* (sauce of salt-fermented fish; see above, pt. I, chapter II.4. "Fish," p. 220) in daytime during Ramadan. The news of their arrest seem to have been interwoven with rumors about them possibly being drunk. When the *wālī* caught them, the woman escaped, but the men were beaten with clubs and showed around in Cairo, and then put in prison, where they stayed for a long time.

They spilled wine all over the earth,
I cannot consent to this . . .
I wish I were the earth.[271]

It is difficult to estimate how numerous were those whose thoughts and feelings reflected a nostalgia for the ancient Mediterranean style. By the end of the fifteenth century an European traveler who observed that the Cairene "Mahomedans" generally "drank no wine" also noticed that there were "many who drank wine secretly with Mamelukes and Jews," and with the local Christians as well.[272] The pronoun "many" should, however, be treated with caution.

The Ottoman occupation loosened the reins of religious discipline and evoked the standards that by the early sixteenth century were long forgotten in Cairo. The Turks are not, as Tuğrul Şavkay put it, "over-strict in their interpretation of alcohol prohibition,"[273] and so in 922–3/1517 Cairenes were shocked to see Turkish soldiers openly drinking wine in the streets.[274] But it was not only the question of soldiers—the Turks drank regardless of the rank. Moreover, those of the Circassian mamluks who managed to avoid the massacre of 1517, drank with them. The standards were set by those in charge: completely drunk sultan Selim almost got drowned in the Nile waters after his boat had been turned over by the wind.[275] Khayr Bak, his viceroy in Egypt and treacherous Mamluk ex-governor of Aleppo, kept up with the mighty ruler's example and sometimes did not sober up for days. Apart from stories about forty mules loaded with Cretan wine he reportedly took for a one-week country excursion,[276] there are also records that show him spending his nights drinking and attempting to perform his

[271] Anonymous verses quoted by Ibn Iyās as a comment to the events of 832/1429, when the implementation of sultan Barsbāy's orders resulted in smashing some 10,000 jars of wine "so that a pond of wine flooded the Rumayla Square;" Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, II, 122.

[272] Von Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 102, 118–19; Arnold von Harff who, while in Cairo, made friends with two German mamluks, drank with them secretly first in the their own houses, then also at times in Jewish or Syrian Christian houses. Cf. also Felix Fabri's story of Hungarian mamluks, some of whom visited the European pilgrims to eat and drink wine with them (Fabri, *Voyage*, II, 434). Also in Syria the wine-seeking Muslims had to visit Jews and Christians to quench their thirst—in 764/1362–3, two drunk men, a Muslim and a Jew, were unlucky enough to fall from the roof of a house in the Jewish quarter in Damascus; see Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 315.

[273] Şavkay, "Cultural and Historical Context," 82.

[274] Ibn Iyās*, Badāʾiʿ*, V, 208.

[275] Ibid., V, 191–2.

[276] Ibid., V, 326.

official duties in the state of "insanity of drunkenness" in the mornings.[277] Yet, he had his moments of reflection, too—as when after a food-and-drink banquet on the Birkat al-Ḥabash, or Ethiopian Pond, an event that resulted in a serious quarrel between the drunk Ottoman and Circassian mamluks, and that made him swear "not to drink any more wine that year."[278]

The relatively high rate of alcohol consumption in the Ottoman milieu could have decreased somewhat by the beginning of the seventeenth century, when "the pasha ordained that no Turk in Cairo could drink wine, which was because the sipahis and janissaries got drunk everyday day and started quarrels and disputes, so much so that many of them lost their lives [because of that]."[279] The ban, however, apparently did not set things in order once and for all, for some sixty years later Antonius Gonzales noticed "some Turks, particularly soldiers," drinking wine in Cairo.[280]

As for the local Muslim population, neither the Turks, nor their free interpretation of alcohol prohibition, were an example to follow. The Turkish occupation did not revive in Egypt the drinking habits of the past. As a popular habit, wine drinking was extinct. As a habit practiced by certain groups of the population of early modern Cairo it was, however, still very much alive. The Turks were but one of these groups. Apart from them, there were also "Christian renegades"—as the Western travelers called the mamluks of European origin—who, newly converted, could not easily give up their practices of yesterday.[281] There were also some Western residents in Cairo, and Western travelers passing through the city and staying there for a limited period. Depending on the status and their own initiative, Westerners either consumed their own wine or used

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[277] Ibid., V, 255.

[278] Ibid., V, 287–8.

[279] Wild, *Voyages*, 90.

[280] Gonzales, *Voyage*, 186.

[281] If Seigneur de Villamont's (in Cairo in 1589–1590) description is true, the Christian renegades "drank wine in huge quantities since the morning till the evening" and, moreover, ate with Christians during the Muslim fasting period, and slept like pigs at the table after the meal was over, and generally lived a "brutal life." The disgust that shows through de Villamont's account may mean that the ways of these "renegades" were unacceptable even by the European standards of the time; but it may also reflect the author's contempt for those who gave up Christianity in favor of another religion; de Villamont, *Voyages*, 231.

the hospitality of the "Christian renegades," of Jews, or of autochthonous Christians.[282]

The question of wine and beer in medieval Cairo is not merely a story of the presence of these beverages in the market and of the local population's demand for them. Entangled in political and religious developments, it is also an inseparable part of a long and turbulent history of a conflict between the two different sets of values. The Mediterranean-minded Egypt was not eager to adapt itself to the newly imposed Islamic circumstances, nor was it prompt to forego its traditional habits for the sake of rigorous doctrinal currents. It took centuries of tumultuous and violent events before the Cairenes accepted the rule according to which alcohol was a beverage forbidden by God's ordinance and drinking it was an offense against God's law. It was only after centuries of Islamic dominance over Egypt that the ideas of prohibition and abstinence managed to supplant the traditional local attitude.

By the late Middle Ages, alcohol drinking ceased to exist as a popular habit and the loose circumstances prevailing in Cairo under the Turkish occupation did not manage to revive the old ways. Not all the Egyptians complied easily, though, and the statement made by al-Jabartī in the early nineteenth century that intoxicants were sold and bought secretly and "only by infidels"[283] was not, it seems, the whole truth. True, those who drank could not be too numerous, definitely not enough to allow to categorize their practices as belonging to the habitual behavior of the local population. In the nineteenth-century Egypt wine could not be, and

[282] It seems that the local Christians, possibly unable to afford imported grape wines, produced an assortment of fruit varieties: "Les Égyptiens fabriquent plusieurs espèces d'eau-de-vie: la meilleure et la plus estimée est celle qui se fait avec le raisin sec; celle que l'on tire des figues ordinaries, des figues du sycomore, des dates, ou des fruits du nopal, lui est bien inféerieure. Les Qobtes abusent beaucoup de ces spiritueux: ils en boivent des bouteilles entières; ce qui les dispose plus particulièrement aux hydrocèles." *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 411–12.

See also an account by Volney (in Cairo in 1783) on "l'eau-de-vie" made of figs and dates. As for "l'eau-de-vie des raisins secs" it was, according to Volney, flavored with anise and very strong, because it was distilled three times. The Syrian Christians and the Copts of Egypt consumed significant quantities of it. Volney considered it an "exaggeration;" at the same time he noticed, however, that examples of such excessive drinking do not cause symptoms of "complete inebriation;" Volney, *Voyage*, 141.

[283] Al-Jabartī, *ʿAjāʾib*, II, 512.

was not, often consumed by the Muslims. Yet, one could still observe that "many of them habitually indulged in drinking wine"[284] and that apart from "decent Muslims" who conformed to the rule of not drinking, there were also "great men, merchants and soldiers" who in secrecy broke the law.[285]

[284] Lane, *Manners*, 153; also 99. Cf. a mid-eighteenth-century traveler, according to whom the persons who drank "were chiefly the soldiery and great men; but it would be reckon'd scandalous in people of business." See Pococke, *Description*, 181. "The use of Laudanum," Pococke adds, "so much in vogue formerly, is succeeded by drinking chiefly strong waters, which they take plentifully at their meals; tho' a great many will not drink, but they use heating things to cheer them.... The Arabs indeed did not drink, or very rarely." (Laudanum is an opium tincture, sometimes sweetened with sugar and also called *wine of opium*). Contrary to what Pococke maintains, *Description de l'Égypte* confirms the use of laudanum in the nineteenth-century Egypt: "Leur boissons consistent en sorbets, et en une espèce de liqueur dans laquelle l'opium est employé comme principal ingrediént: les riches s'envirent avec ce dernier breuvage; les pauvres ne boivant, pour la pluepart, que de l'eau pure ou de mauvais sorbets;" *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 411–12.

[285] *Description de l'Égypte*, 1. *État moderne*, VII, 411–12.

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This index includes all proper names as well as non-Arabic terms, words and foodstuffs. Arabic terms and dish-names are included in Index of Arabic Terms.

INDEX OF ARABIC TERMS

This index includes all Arabic terms and dish-names mentioned in the text. Arabic proper names are included in General Index.